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ABSTRACT

The dilemma articulated in small group and en masse discussions produced the theme, "Through a Glass, Darkly," for the 1971-1972 edition of "Classroom Practices." This document is a collection of essays espousing various methods of teaching English. One predominant concern of all English teachers is the issue of priorities in education. English teachers are especially anxious to rearrange educational perspectives by finding alternatives to systems approaches. The entries in this document try to show teaching techniques, response modes, and evaluation procedures that are superior to impersonal systems and more accurate than any accountability procedure. However, many of these techniques could be programmed, or framed as behavioral objectives, although in both cases, the task would be difficult. Polarized, the educational alternatives that we face are systems approach versus the human factor. It is concluded that systems approaches can be adapted to our classrooms based on the structures used in many of the articles in this document. (This document previously announced as ED 058 215.) (Author/CK)

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Through a Glass, Darkly

CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN TEACHING ENGLISH
1971-1972

Ninth Report of the Committee On Classroom Practices
Cochairmen: Edward R. Fagan and Jean Vandell

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Contents

Preface	vii	*Edward R. Fagan*
Glasses: An Introduction	1	*Edward R. Fagan*
A Parable	4	*Robert Russo*
Person-to-Person Communication: The Oral Book Report	5	*Alice C. Long*
'If You Can't Stand the Heat. . . .'	6	*Sue Bailes*
Motivating Black Children To Use Standard English for School and Business	9	*Smithie Henry*
Happy Papers	12	*Esther Bennett*
On the Naming of Things	14	*Jeanne Malcolm Butcher*
Solving an Old Riddle: Motivation	16	*Carla A. Lammers*
Thats What Happen	18	*Richard Bishop*
Communications Unlimited: Kid Luscious and Learning Wonderful	19	*Donna Hughes*
Frequent Comment	26	*Alma Reinecke*
25 to 1 Makes a Very Dry Martini!	29	*R. Baird Shuman*
Teacher Dispensability	34	*Agnes E. Hanbach*
Media for Everyman: Media Review	36	*Charles Suhor*
Harry	38	*Marilyn Gratton*
Poetry and Relevancy	40	*Joan B. Crawford*
From the Literal to the Literary	41	*Gertrude L. Downing*
Show Me	45	*Ruth L. Optner*
Creative Use of Media	51	*Liane Brandon*
Language Study Comes Alive	54	*Anne W. Dodd*

Increasing Class Participation Through Group Expression	57	*Isidore Levine*
Word Collecting: A Hobby for Fun and Profit	60	*Rena Garter*
Methodical Madness in a Methods Class	62	*Morton D. Rich*
The Trial of George Milton	65	*William P. Ferris*
The 'Writing' Teacher	68	*Eileen Tway*
What's It All About, Man?	71	*Katharine H. Rich*
"Ghost"	73	*Sharon G. Hansford*
Creativity in English	74	*Zora Rashkis*
Readers' Choice	78	*Agnes E. Haubach*
Writing Paragraphs about Paragraphs	82	*James L. Allen, Jr.*
The 'What Am I?' Compositions	84	*William J. Hunter*
Looking Backward: A NOW Approach to American Literature	87	*Marilyn Sewell*
Situations in Composition	91	*Conrad Geller*
Ethnic Literature and the Teaching of English	92	*Eileen S. Ibarra*
An Approach to *The Sound and the Fury*	93	*John Golata*
A Poetry Experience	97	*Mary Bramer*

Preface

Participants in the activities of the NCTE Annual Convention in Atlanta last November were treated to a wealth of materials designed to take the "teach" out of "teacher." By the time the Committee on Classroom Practices met, many of the teachers representing elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, as well as junior colleges, colleges, and universities, were wondering where they fit in the scheme of the profession. The dilemma articulated in small group and en masse discussions produced the theme, "Through a Glass, Darkly," for the 1971-1972 edition of *Classroom Practices.*

Requests for manuscripts were solicited through the Council's national and affiliate publications. From 104 manuscripts, 35 have been selected for this issue. Articles range in length from approximately 250 to 2,000 words. We hope teachers will read, select, and adapt those practices which meet the needs of their own teaching assignments.

With this edition, your cochairmen terminate their three-year affiliation in this capacity. Looking back, we must note the two major changes which have taken place in *Classroom Practices:* the general participation by NCTE members in Classroom Practices Committee meetings; and the specific thematic focus for each issue in contrast with the general format of previous issues. We feel both changes have proved successful and recommend that they be continued.

The cochairmen express their appreciation to those who have helped the committee prepare this publication, to colleagues who have submitted manuscripts, and especially to our fellow committee members, Allen Berger, Morris Landiss, and Lucile Lindberg, who have read and evaluated all manuscripts considered.

Edward R. Fagan
Jean Vandell
Cochairmen

Edward R. Fagan

Glasses: An Introduction

> For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know as also I am known.
>
> I Corinthians 13:12

Emotions are non-discursive, but epigraphs with embedded ambiguities can sometimes convey an emotion, a tone. Within the epigraph cited above the word *glass* stirs myriad connotations—a window pane, a reflection, a mirror, a telescope; a metaphor, a simile. Coupled with *darkly*, *glass* tingles in the mind, catches the light of memory, and images for each of us some special experience.

Many English teachers had such a special experience in Atlanta last November. They saw themselves reflected in the glass of accountability and faced another image in a glass held by the technocrats. These distorted images made them angry and dubious about their roles in the classroom. It was that doubt, coupled with hope, which prompted the committee to adopt this epigraph as a focal point for the 1971-1972 edition of *Classroom Practices*.

A primary concern of teachers in Atlanta was the issue of priorities in education. English teachers—elementary school through college—agreed that somehow educational perspectives had to be turned around, that alternatives to systems approaches had to be considered. That these concerns are far reaching can be inferred from the following excerpt from *The ATA Magazine*, a Canadian publication. The author, Cy Groves, is commenting on a report which calls for a province-wide system of education when he notes that, in a paper of thirty-five pages, the word "teacher" was rarely to be found, but words such as "agencies," "authorities," "systems," and "components" were abundant:

> Any educational system is no better than its teachers and no better

> than the thinking the teachers do for themselves in the business of learning. . . . When the superstructure becomes suffocating there is only one solution: recognize the teacher for what he or she really should be—master of the system.[1]

Mr. Groves' anger at systems managers' seemingly deliberate bypass of teachers in all learning designs echoes exactly the sentiments of English teachers at the Atlanta meeting.

"There are," the teachers at Atlanta said, "teaching techniques, response modes, and evaluation procedures that are better than any impersonal system and more accurate than any accountability procedure. The next edition of *Practices* should present those unique teaching experiences which only a human, dedicated teacher can perform."

We tried to fulfill that charge through the materials which follow, but we admit that many of the teaching techniques described could be programmed; they could also be framed as behavioral objectives. But in both cases, the task would not be easy. It would not be easy because the techniques and responses described by the authors operate on at least two levels: a literal level in response to content and an affective level cued by a silent language of gesture, voice, eye movement, and the like. Systems responses to such silent language are still far ahead in time. For a while, at least, the human teacher will have better (not exclusive) control of his students' affective world.

While we may feel good about such limitations within instructional systems, we have to recognize that even now transcripts of therapy sessions between a psychiatrist and a patient and a computer and a patient are indistinguishable. In our field, Page maintains that grades assigned to essays by a computer and by English teachers are (at least at present) indistinguishable to outside observers.[2] We can take some comfort in knowing that in both the therapy program and in the essay grading program, human beings designed the instructional systems.

But it is axiomatic that instructional systems will become part of every teacher's instructional strategy. We cannot wish them away, and they will be ignored at our peril. This was made dramatically clear at a recent conference held at The Pennsylvania State University addressed to Computers, Values, and the Humanistic Studies. Harold Hodgkinson, former editor of the *Harvard Educational Review*, author of *The Identity*

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[1]Cy Groves, "The Teacher-Master of the System," *ATA Magazine*. (Edmonton, Canada: Alberta Teachers Association, November-December, 1970), pp. 38-39.

[2]Ellis B. Page, "Grading Essays by Computer: Breakthrough or Ballyhoo?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 47:238-243, January, 1966.

Crisis in Higher Education, and Research Educator, Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California at Berkeley, pointed out that humanists will have to cope with systems theory or go under. This coping does not necessarily mean acceptance of a systems approach; it does mean that humanists develop a defensible rationale and objectives for what they are about.

Our usual response to Hodgkinson-like observations can be found in Robert Russo's "A Parable," which follows this introduction. Mr. Russo satirizes the dehumanizing effects of computer systems and bolsters our egos by implying that no system can substitute for a warm, responding human being. Amen. But the World Futures Organization, which recently met in Washington, D.C., predicted that schools would be so slow to respond to the needs of contemporary society that investors would be wise to put their money into learning systems which were not connected with education as a formal establishment.

Polarized, these are the educational alternatives we face. We will have to balance the precision of systems against the ambiguities of the humanities. Such trade-offs, so much a part of the human condition, can be worked out; there are advantages within both response modes. What we cannot do (and what many of us may try to do) is to ignore our need to deal with accountability and systems in our classrooms.

That we can adapt systems approaches to our classrooms is apparent from the structures used in many of the articles which follow. The order, the objectives, the implicit and explicit techniques for evaluation are manifest and systems recommended; the ambiguity, the creativity, the tangential forays which reveal the undiscovered—our discipline's unique contribution to education—are also apparent and humanities recommended. To monitor the precious balance between these two approaches will require our specific attention to what Postman and Weingartner define as media ecology.[3] We need to know who organizes the systems, according to what criteria, and with what intended effect. Such monitoring should help us, as English teachers, to know and be known and to lighten the dark glass of allegedly dehumanized systems.

The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

[3] Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *The Soft Revolution*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1971, pp. 139-146.

Robert Russo

A Parable

Tim sat down and plugged into his HBQ1004 console. The machine brapped a "good morning" and Tim listened, leaning back in his form-fitted, leatherette, padded chair. The machine gurgled instructions to Tim, who dutifully pushed the right buttons and pulled the appropriate levers to begin his day's lesson. "History of Pre-computer America" was the A.M. topic before community lunch at twelve hundred. A picture of a classroom, vintage 1970, flashed onto the photoscreen as Tim shifted positions to get comfortable.

"Education. Consisted of elementary, junior high, and high school levels—terms refer to chronological age brackets rather than MMAG (measured mental ability grouping—see Tape 3-701) of today's learning areas."

Tim looked at the "teacher." Tim had seen pictures of "teachers" on history tapes in the LRC (Learning Resource Center), but, even though his mind was programmed to the concept-orientation approach, rather than the object-orientation approach, he always found it difficult to understand what a "teacher" was.

As the machine defined and explained this historical oddity, Tim wondered what it was that a "teacher" could possibly do that HBQ1004 could not. It was the latest Edcomp, capable of almost any response. Who needed a teacher?

"Learner to Edcomp. Compute. Why teacher when HBQ1004 available for all educational purposes?" A few seconds passed.

"Does not compute. No answer in system."

"Explain, Edcomp."

"Follow prescribed pattern of learner to HBQ1004. Edcomp will not compute." The machine clicked and was silent.

Tim's concept programming had suffered only a momentary setback.

"Learner to Edcomp. Ignore previous question. Continue."

The image of the "teacher" faded into beams of diffused gray light on the photoscreen. . . .

Centereach High School
Ronkonkoma, New York

ALICE C. LONG

Person-to-Person Communication: The Oral Book Report

Junior high school teenagers can profit tremendously from the oral book report if it is given the person-to-person touch. Each speaker first must tell the name of a student who would probably enjoy reading the same book. One of my eighth grade boys said, "Joe should read *Inside Pro Football*, by Higdon, because he's on the team. It's a collection of sports anecdotes about professional players." One of the girls said, "Mary Anne likes a certain boy, so this book, *Something Foolish, Something Gay*, by Sire, is for her. Naturally, it's a love story. The problem is about how the heroine can get her guy when he seems to be interested in somebody else. . . ."

Joanne didn't follow my directions, but she showed that she had listened to Pam: "My book is Pam's type of book. She knows we both like clothes. As a matter of fact, I'm positive this is Pam's type of book, because she read it—*The Country Cousin*, by Cavanna—and recommended it to me on our last oral book report day. I'll report on it from a different angle. . . ."

From the resulting greater interest in reading and in listening, this practice has shown itself to be worthwhile. The specific suggestions from the peer group are well received, and students seem to be more willing to give oral reports.

Grover Cleveland Junior High School
Caldwell, New Jersey

Sue Bailes

'If You Can't Stand the Heat . . .'

Many English composition teachers have a way of throwing out writing assignments with reckless abandon, without considering whether the assignment will be of value to their students. Thousands of students finish freshman "comp" without having really learned anything other than the knack, if they are lucky or extremely bright, of producing an abstract, impractical paper to meet the demands of an abstract, impractical topic. Too often, they learn nothing more than a lot of terminology. They can define a transition, thesis statement, or point of view, but they are no more able to apply these concepts than they were when they registered for the course.

If freshman composition is to have real value for the student, then it ought to be practical. It must teach the student to practice what he learns. If an English teacher would have his students practice what they learn, why doesn't he practice what he teaches? Write an essay! How long has it been since you wrote anything longer than your annual Christmas letter to your last college roommate? And did even that reflect good, informal writing practices? Not only do I believe that *all* English teachers should write an essay at least once a year, but I believe, also, that the paper should be reproduced and distributed to the instructor's own students for criticism. Strange though it may seem to degree-conscious colleagues in Academe, one doesn't have to be even a bright freshman to know when something doesn't make sense. And that is what I feel freshman composition is all about: making sense in writing.

I tried to make sense in writing, recently, but the words just wouldn't come out right. I had been asked to help edit a book of Lenten devotionals written by members of the church to which I belong. As a part of my total effort on the booklet, I was to write an essay of not more than two hundred words on "Forgiving." The limitation was based on space rather than philosophy or theology. The first two efforts were so bad that I

didn't even try to revise them. The third try was worked into the fourth, and still, something was missing. What was it? I went to a writing English teacher—as opposed to an English writing teacher—for criticism. I lacked good organization, had changed points of view, and had digressed from my theme. Rewrite No. 5 read pretty good, and I sprang it on a second colleague, who pronounced it a good paper. I basked in my glory for some three or four minutes while I counted 248 words. I started cutting—a chop here, a whack there, and soon it was under the minimum, but now, it wasn't as good. I have been a writer and editor for a decade, and should not have had such a struggle, but I did. I got to thinking: If this task was so hard for me, then it must be terribly difficult for my students to write. So, the more I thought about it, the more I decided to make use of my experience.

Three of my efforts were put on stencil and reproduced from my handwritten copy. My colleagues graded the efforts. The first was given a C, the second a B, and the third an A−. Next, I got up my courage and took them to my students. I was teaching adults in two evening sections of English 101 in Macon (Ga.) Junior College's off-campus center at Warner Robins AFB. How did they react? How do you think they reacted? They criticized. They asked a zillion questions: Why did you do this? Why did you do that? How could you have made it an "A" paper? Is that what you mean by transition? Wouldn't that sentence have been better as the second in the paragraph instead of at the end? Why did you put so many conjunctions at the beginning of sentences? Were you trying to be fancy? Why did you write a sentence fragment? Is that spelled right? Why have you got a period there? And on and on and on.

I had to tell them things like "I have a sentence fragment, because I was careless in checking my copy." Ditto for a spelling and a punctuation error. They learned that *anybody* can be careless and that carelessness hurts the grade. I told them, quite frankly, that I had done the best that I could. I could not answer some of their questions and told them so. The idea that I wanted to bring home to them was that, even though this craft may have kept me in food and shelter for a while, good writing is not easy. They got the message! They were in the midst of writing their first essay, which was due the next class meeting, and I think that it showed them some of the practical aspects of writing—the need for such things as careful proofreading, good transition, consistency of thought, and choosing a topic that will fit adequately in the words allowed; how to cut out or cut down on verbiage; and the effect that a deadline can have

on quality. Most important, perhaps, it taught them in concrete terms that the person who wanted, so badly, for them to learn, was vulnerable. She made mistakes, too. Sometimes, her words don't come either. BUT she does her best!

I'm pleased with my experience and I plan to do it again. I feel that if musicians, artists and physical education teachers can teach by practicing their crafts, then so can English teachers. We give criticism, but can we take it? In the words of President Truman, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen." If you're not willing to try to write, whether you're successful or not, and share your efforts with your students, I wonder if you ought to teach writing.

Macon Junior College
Macon, Georgia

Smithie Henry

Motivating Black Children To Use Standard English for School and Business

I am a black teacher and teach predominantly black children. In this time of accountability, it is increasingly important for teachers to motivate children, especially black children, to use standard English for school and business. Many children fail to get meanings and to understand textbook materials because they fail to hear beginning, ending, and sometimes middle sounds of words. They reverse letters, leave off endings, mispronounce whole words, and have other deviations because of their dialects. They sometimes miss the sounds of words teachers think of as basic and ordinary. It is with this problem in mind that I share with you some of the simple techniques I have successfully used to motivate black children to learn and to use standard English.

By the time black children reach third or fourth grades, they have developed negative attitudes toward standard English. Children tend to act as we expect them to act, and, far too often, teachers don't expect black children to be capable of learning to use standard English. However, in guiding these children to see the need, we must show them that standard language is necessary in school and business. We examine the reasons for this and relate them to our learning experiences. The most important reason, of course, is that we must be able to communicate with other people in speaking and in writing, using some way that will be understood.

After discovering that language is only good if and when it communicates, students are introduced to the term "dialect." We define, discuss, and explain it from a regional, social, and occupational point of view. Pupils are asked to bring in a list of words or expressions heard in the neighborhood. They thoroughly enjoy this assignment, and "stumping the teacher" turns out to be quite a game, because the teacher is

usually unfamiliar with some of the idioms and the youngsters have to explain the terms.

Students are asked to read "Auld Lang Syne" by Robert Burns in the Scottish dialect. They enjoy the poem, and they begin to realize there are many dialects in the English language. After reading the translation and the explanation of the poem in the text, they are encouraged to rewrite the poem in standard American English. They read poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar written in Negro dialect. "Keep a Pluggin' Away" is a favorite. Later they read poems by Langston Hughes, more by Robert Burns, and stories written in other dialects.

Children discover that dialects differ in vocabulary, idioms, and pronunciation. Dialect is speech that does not attract attention to itself among people of its region or particular group but that multiplies and forms new dialects when people move about carrying their patterns with them. Students become aware that all people speak one or more dialects. When taught to understand the universality of dialects, black students appreciate their own speech and tend to enjoy adding another dialect to their own.

We do not attempt to substitute standard English for the students' dialect, but rather to build up their knowledge of the way things are said in school and business. Acceptance and reshaping keep children from feeling threatened or insecure. No one says or even suggests that they "talk wrong."

Since a child's language is so deeply connected with his attitudes toward himself and his world, he must develop a positive attitude toward the school and business communication tool—standard English. I asked students what an attitude is. One said, "It's a frame of mind." I complimented him and asked the other students if they understood his definition. They did not. He explained, "It's how you think about what you think about." I could not have said it better.

The student's attitudes are not the only ones which must change, however. To understand and accept the child as he is often means a change in *our* attitudes toward the child's language. But appreciation does not mean allowing him to continue using his neighborhood dialect in school situations; it means helping him understand that "there is another way to say it." Everything changes, and attitudes must be first if teachers are to accomplish their desired aims. Children are not easily fooled. They can detect true attitudes no matter what teachers say.

We set goals in our classroom and decide what to work on first. Increasing vocabulary and making "good" sentences seem to take priority.

One youngster remarked that students need usage first, because "if we learn new words and can't use them to express what we want, the new vocabulary won't do us much good." However, in reading newspapers, literature, plays, and other materials, students learn new words and use them in "good" sentences which express their thoughts in the way best understood by others in school, in business, or anywhere.

We get lots of oral practice. Children pair off in recording their speech by reading plays, discussing lessons, role playing, making reports, and sometimes "just practicing" the use of standard English. We use the Language Master, films, the textbook, and many plays. The class begins to recognize different dialects. This awareness must develop if students are to be inspired to develop the standard English way of speaking and writing.

We evaluate progress in many ways. We record and compare. Children record in groups or individually. They are given the option of working in groups not exceeding four. They may work on writing stories, oral reports, and plays, or recording or listening to taped lessons. Sometimes they work together on teacher-made tests—multiple choice and especially the essay type, where they must decide the best way to express the answer. Teacher is free to work with individual children. The class may get noisy, but I expect good learning situations to generate excitement. When noise becomes disorderly, I signal until order is restored.

Last year's sixth grade class had its "final exam" in the auditorium one week before graduation. We were listening to a speaker talk about the summer recreation program. When he said, "We wants you to know . . ." the entire class turned to look at me. I signaled for them to listen to the speaker, but when he said, "The mens will be here to. . . ." they turned again. I knew then that the lessons had been learned.

Oakland Public Schools
Oakland, California

Esther Bennett

Happy Papers

Worksheets? Prescriptions? Assignment sheets? No—they're "happy papers!" If the assignment is tough, sometimes there's a sad face drawn in the margin. Maybe, if it's just plain basic, it's called "the bitter pill." My general aim has been to put a smile into the individualized assignment, as well as to have the children see for themselves that the basic requirements of language arts are practical and sensible.

Step one for learning quotation marks is a "bitter pill"—a Ditto sheet that carefully reviews the usage of quotation marks, but step two is a comic strip. The children write the conversation correctly in story form. If they are so inclined, they can draw their own comic strip and write the story beneath it. Another paper asks the children to write a conversation that might have taken place when Chicken Little thought the sky was falling. Here is an example of the type of results I have received:

> "Help! Help! The sky is falling! The end is near!" shrieked Chicken Little.
>
> "The sky is falling?" asked the cow.
>
> "Yes! Yes!" Chicken Little screamed, jumping up and down, waving his arms frantically. "A piece of it hit me!"
>
> "Uh, huh," said the cow calmly, "Looks like you've been in the catnip again!"

Personal pronouns, it seems, need to be correctly used and then repeated until they sound natural. I have made a tape. Each child listens to it carefully. When he thinks he is ready, he writes a cheer which is taught to the class. Here is an example:

> It is he! It is he! It is he! he! he!
> It is she! It is she! It is she! she! she!
> It is he! It is she! It is he! It is she!
> It is he! It is he! It is she!

Everyone profits from the work of the individual.

Business letters can be written to fun places. For example: "Write a letter to the Blow-up Bubble Gum Company, 246 Dentine Lane, Cuddville, New York 13579. Order 3 cartons of bubble gum. The cost is $3.25 per carton." This type of business letter has brought enthusiastic results from my children.

We have, in our school library, several filmstrips that have accompanying records and are stories for younger children. I have a child view the filmstrip and write the story as he thinks it develops from the pictures. When he is finished, he listens to the record to see if his story is similar to the author's. Sometimes it's better!

Vocabulary building can be done by doing a study of Dr. Seuss. The child reads several Dr. Seuss books, with awareness of style and creativity. Then he writes his own "Dr. Seuss Book." His drawings and story must be original, and the thesaurus becomes his best friend. To teach the child to write directions, have him create his own board game. He must write his directions so clearly that the game can be successfully played by two or more people in the class. It's not easy. Descriptive writing can be made fun by having the child create a new bird. The child should read several descriptions of birds and their habits. He should then create his own bird, describing its appearance, its song, its habits, and its habitat.

Spelling is practiced with a series of tapes that tell a long, continued story. The children write the story by taking it as dictation from the tape. Each tape tells just part of the story. Each child corrects his first try from an answer sheet. He studies his errors and then repeats the lesson. When he has mastered the first part, he is ready to find out what happens next in the story. The children are responsible for all the spelling and punctuation on the tape. The story includes conversation, letters, and all phases of punctuation, as well as spelling demons and the basic spelling words they need to know, but it is the story that spurs them on to the next tape.

All assignments are self-directive and all the work is done in spiral notebooks. No matter what assignment the child is doing, he is always responsible for form, spelling, capitalization, and legibility. This is not too much to ask, because the child can see *why* it is necessary, and can have a good time doing it.

Pashley School
Scotia, New York

Jeanne Malcolm Butcher

On the Naming of Things

Those of us who have chosen the teaching of English for a career are probably word-lovers. But how can we transmit this enthusiasm for language to our classes? Today's high school students probably have had no Latin, less Greek, and at best a smattering of French, Spanish, or German. Despite the sincere efforts of their foreign language teachers, most students seem unaware that English is related to any other language, living or dead.

Yet, in spite of the students' lack of background, we can see that some knowledge of etymology can have benefits in the form of larger vocabulary, better spelling, and, for that matter, enjoyment of our native tongue. But how do we interest students in their own language?

Like every teacher, I have tried various methods of vocabulary building—word lists from current reading assignments, lists of roots and prefixes, lists of words chosen at random, lists the students make, and so on. The most effective technique I have devised is a combined research and theme project that has worked well for me because each student can "do his own thing."

The first step is a dictionary day in class during which each student looks up the etymology of a group of related words from some field of interest to him. For example, the geometry student may look up names of figures, such as quadrilateral, triangle, and polygon. The class athlete may look up names of muscles—deltoid, diaphragm, trapezius. The would-be doctor can work on the names of bones—clavicle, vertebra, fibula, patella. Since the important point here is to pick a good category, we need to steer the student in a profitable direction. Obviously, words from science areas will be especially easy to work with since most of such words break easily into Greek and Latin components which are also useful in terms of further word study.

The second step is for the students to choose some of the most in-

teresting words from their research and to develop a brief theme on these findings. This part of the project can be carried out at home or in class another day. The student must find a way to organize and present his material so that he will have something besides a list. For example, the student who has looked up names of muscles can ask himself these questions about his findings: Are muscles named for their shape? their location? their function? From these questions and others the theme outline will come. The most interesting themes can be read to the class, or each student can tell briefly some of the interesting word origins he has learned. Either of these procedures appeals to the competitive side of student nature.

An additional advantage of this vocabulary project is that it is capable of many variations. Word lists can be scaled up or down according to the age and the ability of the class. Lists of words to work with can be handed out by the teacher, or lists can be created by the students themselves. Class members can work individually while doing research, or a group of students interested in biology can do the dictionary work together. The project can be extended in future assignments, or it can develop into extra-credit posters and bulletin boards.

If this vocabulary study is properly carried out, it will have taught the student a number of valuable concepts: how to use his dictionary—for spelling, for definitions, and for etymology; how to divide words into prefixes, root words, suffixes, and combining forms; how to organize material into an outline and an interesting composition; and how to apply the above skills to other situations. There is also a valuable by-product of this assignment. Other instructors will be delighted with us because we have taught some of their vocabulary to their students for them. We cannot lose.

College of Emporia
Emporia, Kansas

Carla A. Lammers

Solving an Old Riddle: Motivation

While student teaching I was confronted with many problems that were "old hat" to those who had been in the teaching profession for a few years. But one issue that remains troublesome to many teachers, even after many years of experience, certainly did not by-pass me: *motivation.* Mastery of the subject matter, I discovered, was not enough to become a good teacher; I wanted to be effective, stimulating, and all the other over-used, but possibly under-rated words that boil down to motivation. I wanted to hold the attention of everyone in the class and start the students thinking as a group at least once before the eight weeks of my practice teaching concluded. This objective was successfully accomplished when I introduced logic riddles into my sophomore literature classes.

A logic riddle takes the form of a situation-question from which the students are to reason, deductively, how the situation came about. They may ask questions that can be answered only by "yes" or "no," and they must be impressed with the fact that they are not to assume or presume anything. They are to progress to the solution only through what they deduce.

The teacher presents a riddle to the class:

> "A man was found dead in a field with a pack on his back. How did he die?"

The dialogue then proceeds in this manner:

student: "Was the man in a war?"
teacher: "It is irrelevant."
student: "Was he murdered?"
teacher: "No."
student: "Is his age important?"
teacher: "No."

student: "Was the man hiking?"
teacher: "No."

This exchange continues until the students have negated all generalities and begin establishing facts about what sort of pack the man had on, how he got in the field, and so on. The situation involved in this particular logic riddle is that the man was parachuting out of an airplane and his parachute did not open.

After one logic riddle, the students easily comprehend how an assumption can readily lead them astray in their logic. For example, another riddle presents this situation:

> John and Trudy were in the living room. Five minutes later, John left the living room. On the living room floor were broken glass and water, and Trudy was dead. How did John kill Trudy?

The fallacy that occurs here is in the assumption that both John and Trudy are human beings. In fact, Trudy is a goldfish, and John killed her by knocking the fishbowl on the floor. After the riddle is solved, students prove to be quite surprized by the incorrectness of their initial presumptions.

At first, only the more verbal students participate, but soon the interest of the slower student is captured and questions come from *all* members of the class.

Such exercises can be very relevant to a literature class. Since we were taking a unit on the short story, I related the riddles to plot and thus illustrated, quite effectively, the causal relationship that distinguishes plot from subject. For example, in the first logic riddle presented, the subject was a man who parachuted from an airplane, but the plot involves a causal relationship—a man parachuted from an airplane and died as a result of the malfunction of his parachute. Students not only grasped this element of the short story more strongly, but they were shown how fallacies in thinking can produce incorrect conclusions, they were given good illustrations and practice in deductive reasoning, and they were motivated to more actively participate in class discussions.

This game can be stimulating to grade levels other than sophomores. While taking seniors through a chapter on logic, I could not resist establishing their reactions to the riddles. They were skeptical at first, but the riddles proved challenging, and their interest was stimulated almost immediately. The riddles also proved contagious when I used them with

eighth graders, seventh graders, freshmen in high school, and juniors in high school.

Such experiences lead me to conclude that whenever the content proves relevant, logic riddles can enhance the study of English on any level. The riddles are fun and their potential instructional value is extensive.

Bishop McNamara High School
Kankakee, Illinois

RICHARD BISHOP

Thats What Happen

I seen Mr. Harrington come in the room and walk up to my teacher Mr. Bishop and right hateful like tell him he shud come to the office. Then Mr. Bishop told him a few things. He says your not my boss in here in this room. You see Mr. Harrington is the principle of the school and he didn't like that a bit. Well they both left the room mitey mad. Thats what happen.

Students, especially the "non-academics," seldom have an opportunity to write description. If descriptive writing is assigned, it is usually the dreary task of describing someone or something which requires accurate or factual information.

Contrived, unexpected scenes, staged either by teachers or by students, can lead to brisk, enthusiastic writing. The paragraph above is an example of a description of a prearranged situation staged by an English teacher and his principal just as a ninth grade English class had begun. After the astonished students had been informed that the situation was contrived, they were asked to describe the scene that had taken place. The fervor which ensued was unparalleled by any other writing assignment that term.

Laurel High School
Laurel, Delaware

Donna Hughes

Communications Unlimited: Kid Luscious and Learning Wonderful

Line the resource center shelves with paperbacks. Put spinner racks in prominent places. Display new titles using advertising posters from the local news agency. Pin student-created collages to bulletin boards. Hang mobiles that move symbolically as characters within a novel interact. Recognize as reading *Life's* and *Ebony's* pictures and captions, the voter's pamphlet, the driver's manual, haiku, and cartoons. Do these things and the room will fill with page flippers, scanners, and readers.

Choose an idea that's big enough—greatness, conflict, alienation—and students will read, write, and discuss *because* their experiences are vastly different. Vital, too, are spontaneous discussions, shared experiences about current affairs, beliefs, and new ideas. Courteous listening, thoughtful explanations, and clarification of issues should be part of the action. Some of the ideas need to be carved out on paper so the words can be viewed and felt. Movies, photo essays, and art projects show ideas graphically. Considered language and familiarity with the best of literature is encouraged. Ways to produce clear and effective written messages are explored. Ideas leave the classroom—letters to congressmen, inquiries about problems directed to primary resources, contact with the pulsating world outside. Students begin to be life-long learners.

During the summer of 1970, teachers, librarians, and administrators in Yakima's West Valley School District worked together to create such a program. Encouraged and motivated by an ESEA Title II Special Needs Grant for $18,000 and guided by a commitment to implement a continuous progress curriculum, twenty-one staff members began inservice courses at West Valley offered by Central Washington State College. The curriculum to be planned was for five elementary schools and the high

school; it encompassed grades 7-12 and included 1200 students. The experiences of the high school under two prior grants and the Washington State guidelines, *Creating a Language Learning Design*, gave direction.

Communications Unlimited, as our project was called, had three basic objectives: to implement a continuous progress curriculum in grades 7-12; to encourage reading and language development through the high school resource center; and to increase district-wide curriculum planning and evaluating. These objectives were identified by assessing the district's language arts program.

A description of the seventh and eighth grade language arts programs prior to 1970 included the words "ineffective," "uninspiring," "inadequate," and "unpopular." Language arts at the high school fared a little better because it had begun to change two years before. Before those changes were initiated, the high school English program, too, had been unpopular and had been responsible for the greatest number of failures and dropouts. As one elementary principal put it when he viewed the language arts program in the district, "Any change would be an improvement."

The first steps sound deceptively simple. We began by describing our teaching practices. We continued by discussing our philosophy of language, the nature of learning, and the role of the teacher. We examined the discrepancies between what we were doing and what we believed.

Perhaps the first step in changing a program for the learner is to make every teacher a learner. The first purchase from the grant was a professional library. Mager, Glasser, Rogers, Holt, Muller, Dixon, Moffett and others became close companions. State educators came to visit and share ideas. We studied, modified, and altered teaching strategies. We began to write an ever-changing curriculum based on performance objectives. We changed from dispensers of information to learners and diagnosticians for other learners.

Altering the teacher's image of a teacher was only one change. Classrooms needed to be refurnished with learning materials. Textbooks were stacked on the shelves to be used as references. Each elementary school chose a basic 500 book library for pleasure reading. Some money went for special interest magazines—*Rod and Custom*, *Science Digest*, *Motorcyclist*. Selections were left up to each of the separate school staffs because each was working within a different school framework. One school was humanities oriented, another had a social studies emphasis. Two were more typical. The last had no English teacher at all. No attempt was made to standardize selections since the purpose of the grant was to create

programs that met special needs, not to rubberstamp curriculum in every building.

The end of the summer found the teachers working together for the first time. A common philosophy that included individualization through the use of paperbacks and non-print materials as well as shared curriculum materials was evidence of the newly evolving language arts program. The expanded high school resource center became the hub of the new system. Some of the money was spent on materials to back up learning packages to be housed, processed, and circulated from the high school. Packages developed by teachers, principals and librarians link the district's schools. At the same time an ever increasing number of packages provide for relevance, choice, and individual needs.

Thematic units selected by the group incorporated reading, writing, and speaking skills. A listing of several packages composed during the summer reflects the variety of interests and cross-disciplinary approaches: "Lands of Ice and Snow," "The Glory of the South," "Is Time Running Out?" and "Just for Fun."

Since West Valley's program was begun, there have been over 200 packages written for use in the high school. Because the junior high program is newer, there are approximately 50 packages for that level. Some special interest materials are used on both levels. Packages provide guidelines for students to use to develop skills, to explore ideas, to relate the cognitive to their own world. A package is an elective experience that provides options in the way a student may learn. A package is a listing of what a student is and can be doing. Further, a package provides experiences in reading, writing, listening, and speaking which encourage continuous growth.

An explanation of the individual package parts and the way they are used helps clarify the new program.

The typical package is comprised of the following parts: a cover-contract, an introduction and concept, a time limit, requirements and optional activities, and a bibliography of printed and audio-visual materials. In addition there are a variety of materials to be used at the teacher's discretion, including consensus tasks, problem solving, in-class writing assignments, discussion questions, community resources, movies, and report forms. Teachers are expected to adapt and create additional materials as a package is used.

The first page is an attention getter. Designed to catch the eye and announce the subject, the colored cover sheet lists the requirements and provides space for record keeping and conference data. Once signed, the

cover becomes a student-teacher contract, an agreement about what is to be completed, standards, restrictions, and time limits. Sometimes it lists specific goals a student is working toward in addition to the package goals. The margins allow space for comments, evaluations, and future direction. Once completed, the cover-contract is placed in the cumulative folder that accompanies the student through his years in West Valley's language arts program. There it records the student's experiences, the expected level of achievement, and the student's and teacher's evaluations and diagnoses. Written assignments may be stapled to the cover for ease in reviewing work at some future date. Dated entries document the teacher's conference schedule and chart possible direction in learning.

The second page holds an introduction which states in more specific detail the subject or skill to be studied with the package. Relating the subject to interest and need, the introduction may take several forms. Some give vital background which justifies the existence of the package. Others tell why a student should undertake the study:

> Pleasure is the primary goal of this study. Another goal is an appreciation of the fable as it has been used as an effective teaching and learning tool for people of all ages. . . .

By exploring the complexity of the topic or the special interest, the introduction may encourage or discourage a student who is considering it. The introduction should briefly refer to related packages or materials that better meet the particular needs or interests of students who decide against undertaking the tasks in a package.

A simple statement of the skill to be developed or the concept to be explored follows, if it is not included in the introduction. Pinpointing the purpose of the package and identifying what concept is being explored is extremely vital to clarifying the learner's objective. There are, however, goals of the entire program that always exist whether they are stated specifically or not. They are the major goals of most language arts programs: practice and improved skill in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The briefest section of the package, the time required, follows. Despite the fact that there is a recommended time, a teacher and student may negotiate the duration of any project. Time will be determined individually by the rapidity and facility with which a student can adequately fulfill requirements. One student may read a book in a single sitting; another may need to read the book for several days before that portion of a package is completed. Requirements for one package which

send a student into additional packages, a textbook, drill, or library research, and the number of optional assignments that a student undertakes and the skills required by a package may also influence the time allotted.

Boxed requirements for ease of identification follow. Numbered, indented, and stated in behavioral terms, the requirements vary with different packages. One package may state simply:

1. The student will complete the test "Roots, Prefixes and Suffixes" with 90% accuracy.
2. The student will create ten new words using roots, prefixes, and suffixes. He will be able to define his own words with 100% accuracy.

Another may list several requirements that encompass several skills, demand reading, viewing, and listening. Such a package is generally thematic in structure and encourages interrelated learning. For example, the requirements for the package titled "The Quality of Greatness" are:

1. Read one book about a great person from the bibliography or a book approved by your teacher.
2. Write a book review (200 words) on the book.
3. Through small group discussions students will discuss and identify the characteristics of greatness.
4. Using the character or characters, create a myth.
5. Complete two of the optional assignments.
6. Listen to one of the records or tapes listed in the bibliography.

Just as the time is negotiable, so are requirements and the level of expectation. Levels of proficiency cannot be written into a package as a blanket requirement. Packages then are stated behaviorally, but an individual standard is established in conference.

Because the standard of performance is determined individually, the teacher is expected to know a great deal about the student—his reading speed, comprehension, writing ability, grasp of basic skills, and myriad things that might affect performance. The student-teacher conference with the cumulative folder as a resource then becomes the foundation on which the learning direction is given.

The section that follows the requirements provides enrichment. Optional or elective activities are planned for student interest. Tasks are open-ended and creative. Frequently they direct the student away from the school and into the community. They go beyond the skill level and ask that students use language creatively. A mixture of optional activities from several packages includes:

Make a sketch of a great man or woman.

View the filmstrips, "Words and Their Backgrounds," "Vocabulary Development," and "The Importance of Vocabulary in Communication."

Using rudimentary costumes, plan a group presentation with 2 or 3 other persons which portrays the animals and actions of a particular fable.

Attend a West Valley football game with a tape recorder. Pretend that you are a sports announcer and make a tape of the game.

Listen to the record, *West Side Story*, and write about any similarities it might have with the book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

A bibliography of books, magazines, pamphlets, reprints, and audio-visual materials completes the package. The philosophy for materials selection is that which will interest both boys and girls, provide several views of a subject, vary widely in difficulty, and include both the classic and contemporary. Audio-visual materials are equally important. Talking books encourage the slow reader and allow him to participate in discussions. The lecture-tapes add new dimensions for the ambitious. Note taking, new views, and acuity in gathering information may all come from the skillful use of audio-visual materials used independently.

Throughout the entire program the conference plays a vital part in the learning process. The teacher's role in the conference varies. When the student begins working, the teacher assists by offering appropriate or assigned packages. Sometimes they may create a package together to meet a special student need. Early conferences may simply establish goals, due dates, or check points. As the student and teacher work through a package, they establish limits and standards.

As the student progresses, the packages will require more complex skills. The teacher may give assistance in rough spots, answer questions, question answers, direct the student to supplementary reading, and provide supportive positive reinforcement. The conference may take a full period as the teacher and student work through an evaluation, or it may take a few seconds as a contract is initialed and dated.

As conference skills develop, the teacher-student relationship becomes more dynamic. Generally the two share a table or sit side by side because it is a mutual learning experience. The conference should be unhurried and the teacher should spend more time listening than talking. The cumulative folder and current package are the focus for the con-

ference, but as the student talks, he may change the subject. The teacher should be prepared to learn about the student's personal experiences, expectations, future goals, and family life. While these may not be directly related to language arts, the student does not live in isolation, and many of these experiences may have direct bearing on achievement or lack of it.

The continuous process that recognizes none of the artificial barriers of subject matter encourages the teacher and student to think clearly and logically as they order the learning experience. It provides a dynamic cumulative curriculum that capitalizes on many materials, the community, outside resources, and the ingenuity of the student. It makes learning palatable by adding choice current interests and personalization. It allows for variety in learning styles, rates, and interests. It unifies the curriculum without regimentation—allowing the teacher to provide the options and variations as he recognizes the individual needs of students.

Paradoxically, the most successful student in the West Valley program does not always work within the teacher created package. He writes his own. After identifying his learning goals, he chooses materials and experiences to allow him to reach those goals. He also determines evaluation techniques. This pattern for learning fosters self-direction and develops students who will have life-long love affairs with learning.

West Valley High School
Yakima, Washington

Alma Reinecke

Frequent Comment

The student teacher, after her first day of observing my ninth grade English classes, remarked sympathetically that she noticed the kids seemed rather unruly. I feigned surprise and agreed they had been lively, but I hadn't noticed anyone being unruly. Perhaps when she got used to the students and noticed what they were talking about, they wouldn't seem so unruly to her. I usually encourage talking freely in my classes.

The following day the students were writing haiku. After reviewing the conventions of this verse form and reading several examples, I gave the students the first line of a haiku and asked that each one complete it, and write an original poem. Later the students read the finished haiku aloud to the class. Had the students written any of these poems before class, wondered the student teacher. She suggested that the haiku were very good, but the kids had been talking so much that she couldn't see how they could have composed them during class. I suggested that by talking and helping one another, the students responded more creatively than if they had worked in silence.

It seems incongruous that English teachers, dedicated to the teaching and enrichment of language, should so often repress the use of language in the classroom for no other reason than the conviction that a quiet class is a good one. We ought rather to regard the use of language as a remarkable activity, setting people apart from household pets. I believe that any proficiency in the English language which the students bring to class should be respected and utilized. Because I believe this I will wear, like an invisible sign, the attitude: Please comment! Comment on what goes on around you and in your mind. Comment on what you dream and hope and feel. Comment on what troubles you. The more you comment the more skillful will grow your ability to comment. The wider will grow your world. The richer and more secure will be your very existence as a person. By commenting you create your world and yourself.

And so I don't request silence unless there is a purpose for having silence. We talk while we perform classroom chores, such as distributing materials and collecting papers. We talk while the teacher is re-threading the machine for a second showing of the film. If there are a few minutes left before dismissal, we talk and do not consider the time wasted. How can students believe that I like teaching the English language and its literature if I am persistently forbidding them its use? Language is an oral activity before it becomes anything else.

As their English teacher, instead of limiting my utterances to directions, presentations, and lectures, I ought to speak to each of the students in a personal way at every chance or contrived opportunity. This takes the energy and awareness of prayer without ceasing, but it is worth the effort. Frequent comment going both ways sets up a warm room, fostering serious engagements with literature and writing.

Haunted by schoolday memories of the backs of heads, and of papers coming up the row, and of my handing papers down the row, I nearly always distribute paper handouts to each student. In the little extra time this takes I move close enough to see him as a person and to make a comment. What would I say? Maybe just, "Hi!" or someone has a bandaged hand or a black eye or new glasses. Someone is wearing a bright dress, a new wig, or unusual jewelry. Someone has rated a news story in the local paper. A student is reading a book I can notice and ask about. The comment doesn't much matter. It is the person I am recognizing.

I frequently provide the occasion for students to talk about their lives outside of school. On a Monday morning a good opening topic is, "How many of you saw. . . " and fill in an appropriate movie or TV show title. In minutes everyone is talking to someone else about a weekend event. Moving among the talking students, I learn about local movies and TV shows I don't have time to see for myself. After this first and perhaps most important part of the class period, we move on to whatever we are doing next to increase our competence in the English language.

If a student's speech is going to embarrass him, he is going to consider the cost before he opens his mouth. Thus I do not correct the grammar of a student—I feel it is discourteous to do so. A fellow student might repair an "I seen" with an "I saw," and I would surely help a student prepare a presentation in such a manner that his usage would cause him no distress. But if I make him uncomfortable, he is going to distrust his language.

In their written work the students have the same invitation to comment freely without being put down. Red ink means a comment. If they

would like a comment, they will need to tell me something, and that is writing. To satisfy the requirements of our marking system, the students may select those compositions they wish to have graded.

The next activity I suggest will be deemed sheer heresy by those who equate note writing with lavatory wall graffiti. When I see a student trying to push a half written note under his unfinished comparison-contrast paragraph as I come by, I ask him if he is catching up on his correspondence and remind him to finish his assignment as well. Where can students get more relevant practice in writing narration, description, persuasion, or whatever, than in these essays, carefully and lovingly composed for their friends?

After students have the assurance that the language they use will not be minimized, they will be more open to a variety of language experiences. If they cannot feel secure in their own variety of English, which is a part of them, they will have little confidence in anything I might try to teach them. This too might betray them. In their own language, a reflection of themselves, they can catch a glimpse of what they might become through language, through frequent comment.

Edison Junior High School
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

R. Baird Shuman

25 to 1 Makes a Very Dry Martini!

Twenty-five to one makes a *very* dry martini and in many cases a still drier classroom experience. Yet this is a typical student-teacher ratio in most English classes. Secondary school teachers ponder the question of how to provide individualized instruction, how to accommodate individual differences, and how to communicate as a person to each student in a class. Every English teacher should realize the importance of person-to-person contact in teaching, but many are bewildered and frustrated in their attempts to deal on a truly individual basis with more than the smallest handful of the hundred or so students most of them teach every day.

The English teacher can make one presupposition about his students: they *like* to communicate. Most of them do this orally through speaking and physically through "body language." They communicate by how they dress, by how they wear their hair, by how they carry themselves, by how they react to what goes on about them. Some communicate by playing the piano or by strumming a guitar. Some communicate by banging around, tripping over chairs, making unnecessary and disruptive noise. Some, whose communication does not bring them the acceptance and praise which all people covet, communicate to a society in which they feel alien by committing anti-social and illegal acts. But all communicate. The English teacher's job is to channel the communication and to try to make it productive. For most youngsters, communication is their prime safety valve. If the teacher can find a way to make them communicate in writing or in speaking, he will have taken the first step toward relieving many of the particular frustrations which teen-agers face.

A major question facing the teacher is that of how he can best get his students to the point of communicating in writing so that what has been communicated can be referred to and discussed or at least reread and thought through by the student who has written it. Many students frankly

say that they do not like to write and they groan audibly at the suggestion of any written assignment. Such students have probably been exposed to very limited experiences in writing, experiences involving typical high school writing assignments, and have received very negative criticism of what they have done, leaving them with the impression that they are poor writers and that writing is an unpleasant and unrewarding activity.

However, in recent years, research has indicated that when the circumstances are right, students actually like to write and find immense satisfaction in this form of communication. Two decades ago, Alvina T. Burrows stressed the use of oral expression as a springboard to composition and achieved remarkable results with students in the teaching of composition.[1] More recently, the Project English Curriculum Center at Northwestern University, headed by Wallace Douglas, has made a thorough examination of the process of composition and of the teaching of writing and has concluded that "so far as conscience, schoolroom and parents will allow, let the child alone to do his own experimenting with his own grammatical and stylistic patterns and transformations."[2]

Ken Macrorie in *Uptaught*, one of the two or three books which I consider required reading for English teachers, refers to typical school English as "Engfish." Of it he writes, under the heading "The Purpose of English,"

> The grade school student is told by his teacher that he must learn

material deleted due to copyright restrictions

> reads Ph.D. theses.[3]

In his books on composition, *Telling Writing* and *Reading to be Read*, Macrorie, like James Moffett, stresses the need for the student to write for an audience. He, in his own teaching of composition, has students read other students' papers and has much of his students' production mimeographed. For Macrorie's students, there is purpose in writing, as there should always be.

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[1] Alvina T. Burrows, *They All Want to Write* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1952).

[2] "Introduction" in *Lessons in Composition for High School* prepared by the Northwestern Curriculum Study Center in English, 1967.

[3] Ken Macrorie, *Uptaught* (New York: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1970), p. 52. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

An anonymous quotation states that "When a finger is pointed at an important problem in the world, educators will study the finger."[4] Certainly teachers of composition have been guilty of something similar. When youngsters are beginning to experience the joy of creating, of expressing themselves, we ferret out comma splices, we circle the spot where an apostrophe should have been placed, we make spelling errors seem like mortal sins, and we generally shatter the self-confidence of the student who is making his first hesitant sallies into the world of written expression.

All that I have to suggest is that teachers adopt a humane approach to students who are learning to write. I would allow as much free writing as possible. That is, I would not assign process themes or other such contrived essays; rather, I would encourage students to write about things that matter to them in any form that is natural to them.

Stephen M. Joseph, a master in working with ghetto youngsters, has gotten the most reluctant of students to write and has published a most enthralling book of student writing, all of it produced by ghetto youngsters who had little motivation to write until they came into contact with Joseph and some of his colleagues. In a typical class, Joseph urges his students to write at least a page, but he forces no one to do so. His students have three options in regard to their writing: they can write about something that's important to them and sign their name, they can omit their names, but still hand the writing in, or they can write a page and neither sign their name nor hand it in.[5]

Using this technique, Joseph has achieved stunning results and many of them are recorded in his book. When one reads through *The Me Nobody Knows*, he is struck by the force, directness, and honesty of the student writing presented therein. A fourteen-year-old who writes, "I think that women are the greatest thing that happen to man because men and women have the power to produce. And that all I got to say,"[6] is writing with grace despite the obvious nonstandard elements in what he has written. He is being honest in a way that few high school students have been encouraged to be honest.

Creative writing, freely approached, is probably the best means that a teacher has of achieving person-to-person contact with students. The writing of poetry is often as revealing an experiment as can be under-

[4]Quoted in *The Teacher Paper*, III (February 1971), p. 28.

[5]Stephen M. Joseph, *The Me Nobody Knows* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 12.

[6]Ibid., p. 91.

taken. Brian Powell suggests that the teacher "must convince his pupils—largely by his own attitude and example—that the writing of poetry can be a rewarding enterprise. He should stress that poetry imposes no restrictions of subject matter or structures, and that its range is as extensive as the imagination of the writer."[7] The teacher should engage in creative writing with his students and should share his efforts with them as they share theirs with him and with each other.

If some framework is necessary in order to get students started, the teacher may follow the lead of Naomi Levinson, a junior high school teacher in Queens, New York, who puts one word on the blackboard, such a word as "hope," or "death," or "love." Then she points to it and says "Write."[8] I recently did the same thing with junior high school students for whom I was running a poetry workshop. I told them to think about a word and to write some words down about it, not necessarily in poetic form. One seventh grader, working with the word "shadow," came up with "distorted duplication," which I thought was as good a description of a shadow as I had ever heard.

One of my teaching interns waited one day for his ninth graders to be seated, then started pitching lemons at them. When everyone had a lemon, he said, "I want you to get to know that lemon. Feel it, smell it, taste it, but don't put it down unless you have something to write about it." The results were amazingly imaginative, and they came from very average English students who were suddenly turned on.

Another of my interns found that many of his ninth graders were intimidated by their poor spelling and by the humiliation they had previously been subjected to because of it. Other teachers had drilled these students in spelling, teaching them words which many of them could already spell or would never use, failing to help them learn the words with which they actually had trouble and which they were likely to use in their writing. My intern declared a moratorium on penalties for misspelling. He told his students that they should never fail to use a word simply because they were not sure of how to spell it, nor should they interrupt the flow of their writing to go to the dictionary and look a word up. Rather, they should circle any words which they were unsure of. If they had spelled the word correctly, the teacher put a check mark above it. If they had spelled it incorrectly, he wrote in the correct spelling and urged the student to learn the spelling.

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[7] Brian Powell, *English Through Writing Poetry* (Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock, 1968), p. 104.

[8] Joseph, *The Me Nobody Knows*, p. 11.

The result of this experiment was that students began to concentrate on their own very actual spelling problems rather than on hypothetical ones, and soon their spelling improved. Also, their vocabulary range increased because the students now had no reason to avoid using a word which they could not spell with any assurance. The greatest benefit was that student-teacher rapport was very high, because the students saw that the teacher really did care about them and about teaching them things that they really needed to know. Joseph achieved his rapport with ghetto youngsters in much the same way. He writes of his awareness that "the children I had been teaching were something special. All children are."[9] The person who really feels this will communicate it to his students and will minimize his difficulties with even the most recalcitrant student. The person who does not feel this does not belong in teaching and will never succeed as a teacher.

The person-to-person relationship in teaching has less to do with numbers than with outlook. It helps not to have huge numbers to deal with, but the real teacher will always be teaching individuals no matter how many bodies occupy the seats in his classroom and will always manage to be on a wave length with each student in some way, for if he is not, teaching will be a torture to him.

Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

[9]Ibid., p. 9.

Agnes E. Hanbach

Teacher Dispensability

In order to become progressively dispensable in the classroom, the teacher should emulate the Socratic method of teaching—asking probing questions in order to elicit a clear and complete answer. Only in this way can the teacher expect students to attain a greater degree of self-awareness and self-motivation. What a student does on his own is often a reliable measure of his instructor's skill and effectiveness.

Leaving students to work without direct guidance after adequate explanation of what the assignment or topic of discussion is does not necessarily mean that the teacher leaves the room. There are, in fact, certain legal deterrents to such action. The teacher's presence of itself affords stability and spur to students. He may wander about, observe and appraise a group's or an individual's effort, and perhaps make suggestions. In any case, he is there. He is part of the action. Were he not there the activity would proceed less efficiently. In an open circle discussion where the interchange is carried entirely by the students on whatever topic or problem is assigned, it may happen that the teacher says absolutely nothing for considerable periods. Still, his presence is essential. He listens. This is of itself a highly developed skill. He reacts in manner, in facial expression, possibly in gestures. He is a vital force even if silent. Without him, the happening would not come off. A pointless bull session would ensue. Here is the cogent mystique of personality. Somehow, what the teacher *is* affects the situation. So, "dispensable" in this respect means largely that the teacher retires to a point of observation, where he acts as a catalyst to learning.

It has been suggested to me that if the teacher is so little needed, there is no justification for the high educational requirements for teachers. I refer to Ralph Waldo Emerson's statement, "The great teacher is not the man who supplies the most facts but the one in whose presence we become different people." I heartily concur, but the learning, hence the

facts, are necessary. All that body of knowledge which the teacher has assimilated, the personal inquiry he has conducted, plus travel and wide experience in living, have certainly done more for him than permit him to qualify for a teaching position. It must have served to stretch his mind, give him inner strength and awareness of the world and its peoples. In other words, such extensive exposure must have made him more of a person. It is these qualities of inquisitiveness and awareness that he endeavors to develop in his students. Can't it be expected that a teacher will reflect the humanity he hopes to instill? I believe so, and I also believe with Emerson that it is this attribute more than any other which makes great teachers. It does not minimize the usefulness of acquired knowledge. Such learning needs no defense. It is expected of teachers, most of whom I like to believe find learning a joy in itself.

Another argument is that setting a class to work on its own is but an excuse for the teacher's laziness. I can only stress that making oneself dispensable in this special sense is indeed a difficult job. It requires imagination, resourcefulness and planning to a greater degree than any amount of lecture preparation.

The Great Books Program affords an apt analogy. The leader, if he is a good one, provides no answers about whatever reading is under discussion. He asks the questions. He stimulates conversation. He resolves no disputes except by attempting to give both sides equal time. Yet he must be more familiar with the reading than any of the participants. When the conversation progresses of itself, his role is careful listener. He interjects a comment or another question when the interchange needs redirection or when it has strayed off the subject. Like the dispensable teacher he plays the Socratic part of Gadfly, but he is very necessary to the activity. Without him nothing significant or constructive would happen in the group. So it is with the teacher in the classroom.

Clarence, New York

Charles Suhor

Media for Everyman: Media Review

Media Review is a series of half-hour telecasts, originating in New Orleans, that invites students to react to literature through original collages, films, mobiles, and other media that encourage creative, highly personalized response.

The program is not a showcase in which star students dazzle the audience with their sophistication. Some, but by no means all, of the student participants are college-bound. It is one of the strengths of the program that average students perform impressively with trans-media interpretations of literature. The student audience seems to recognize that their peers' imaginative reactions to literature on television are solid, interesting efforts and not virtuoso performances beyond their grasp.

A typical *Media Review* program might involve four or five students and a moderator talking about a modern work like *Fahrenheit 451*, *Of Mice and Men*, or *Love Story*. The conversation is an informal exchange of ideas about the students' collages, films, or other media-reactions to the work.

There are no taboos. Students frequently challenge the assumptions about each other's interpretations as revealed in their media creations, and the result is a lively and dynamic form of literary analysis. Students are also free to express their distaste for a literary work or part of it (as in the case of the student who found Herbert's metaphysical concrete poems "completely boring").

Variations in the format of *Media Review* prevent the show from imitating itself and creating its own set of formulas. For example, a program devoted to concrete poetry brought student and professional concrete poems on camera for comment and for occasional interpretive readings by the students and the moderator. A concrete poetry contest held by a local newspaper in connection with the TV show drew over 200

student poems, six of which were published in an attractive graphics layout.

On a black poetry program, a specially prepared tape recording of contemporary verse and music was played while student artists on camera sketched their impressions of the poems. A program on improvisation featured a teacher doing improvisation exercises and role-playing with a group of tenth grade students.

Media Review is effective subliminal in-service. The innovative nature of much of the content of the telecasts has led to classroom experimentation. Since the telecast began, use of collage book reviews has increased greatly in New Orleans area schools. Concrete poetry is on the upswing, and interest in contemporary literature, film, and multimedia presentations is growing rapidly.

The average cost of *Media Review* is $150 per show. Each program is aired six times daily for two days on WYES-TV, New Orleans' educational TV station, so that students in different classes and different periods within each school can view the show. The videotapes are made at Loyola University Communications Department, with students handling most phases of production.

The first two programs, produced on a pilot basis early in 1970, were underwritten by the Louisiana Council for Music and the Performing Arts. Enthusiastic response from the schools, a $500 award by the American Film Institute, and the continued support of the Louisiana Council made a series of eight programs possible during the 1970-71 session. It now appears that *Media Review* will be a regular part of the educational television resources in the New Orleans area. As one teacher remarked, the series speaks to students by allowing students to speak. Perhaps this prototype might suggest possibilities for similar programs in other regions.

New Orleans Public Schools
New Orleans, Louisiana

Marilyn Gratton

Harry

At 4:30 a.m., Harry rouses his younger brother, and, after a small cold breakfast, the two boys trudge off to their uncle's tiny grocery store a few blocks away, where they have spent the early morning hours for as long as they can remember. Although Harry complains constantly about the work he does, there is a certain pride in his voice.

Harry usually arrives at school in good humor, for he and his brother clown around a lot while stocking and cleaning the store, and they often manage to sneak an apple or an orange. By the time his first class is over, however, Harry's good mood has vanished, and in the next several hours he is transformed into an "angry young man."

Harry cannot read. He is content to sit quietly and not bother anyone, but, as he explains, his teachers seem to feel that if they single him out, then he will learn something and so will the entire class. He often wonders if his teachers get together and declare a "Let's-Get-Harry-Day."

When Harry was in elementary school, his uncle's business collapsed and the whole family—aunts, uncles, grandparents, the lot—moved to South Carolina where they stayed for nearly a year. In South Carolina, Harry did not go to school because the family never had enough money to buy him clothes and supplies, and besides, he had a younger brother to look after. Oscar, his uncle, learned that a friend who had a small grocery store had to leave the area and wanted Oscar to manage the store. They scraped together enough money to make the trip back to Long Beach and Harry was re-enrolled in school. Because of his age and size, he was placed in the fifth grade, the grade he would have been in had he gone to school in South Carolina. It was not long before he started playing hookey; after all, he could not understand most of what was happening, and he was needed at the store.

In the years that followed, the store did a moderately successful business. Oscar and Harry's father bought it and Harry continued to "do time" in the local public schools.

Harry has very definite ideas concerning education and educators, but he wants very much to learn how to read. And so it came to pass that Harry and I were introduced. He was very skeptical about the whole idea and I would be a liar if I said I was not just a bit apprehensive myself. We shook hands and came out fighting.

The first couple of sessions were so disastrous that I almost quit, but it was Harry's apparent determination that made me reconsider. A sixteen-year-old who can read nothing more than a grocery list is prime material for a dedicated young educator-to-be. Dick and Jane were definitely out at this age level, but the material that is "in" is too difficult. Problem number one: find suitable material for Harry to read; something easy enough to provide success, yet captivating enough to stimulate interest.

Taking my cue from an article I read in a recent professional publication, I asked him to watch television—anything he wanted. At the next meeting, after we both had watched the same shows, I handed him a "short story." The vocabulary was deceptively simple and he was delighted to find that it was a variation on the show he had seen the night before. Having seen the original, he could almost second-guess the material and, in fact, as the weeks passed he often changed and corrected my adaptations.

Although this technique initially appeared to be successful, it eventually proved ineffective, because the idea became stale and the material was probably poorly written. Each of these reasons, in its turn, was responsible for numerous setbacks. Thus, problem number two: find alternate plans, methods, devices, techniques—something to alleviate the boredom and remove the necessity of calling on Rod Serling to ghostwrite.

Having read only the one article, I was hard put to come up with a new solution. To buy time, I sent him to the library to get a book on anything; we would read it together. And so my second solution evolved. Harry chose a book on sports figures that truly interested him. He read it in the span of a week, and what's more, he understood it. Needless to say, I was delighted, but more importantly, so was he.

The past few weeks seem to have gone by unbelievably swiftly. I still wonder how long Harry's enthusiasm will remain. He has progressed, but not without some disappointments. He still is very angry by the time I see him, and his effort in his classes has apparently not changed noticeably. But his English teacher tells me he has become a contributing member of the class in the past few weeks, and he seems to have acquired new pride in himself.

Looking back, I can see Harry as an almost frighteningly typical "disadvantaged" youngster. His only source of pride and success was his family's store; his teachers never had the time to really get to know Harry. He is still a bit distrustful, even of me and my motives, but he has let down most of the protective shields that separated us in the beginning.

Glendora High School
Glendora, California

JOAN B. CRAWFORD

Poetry and Relevancy

One day, as I was pondering the problem of finding a new and interesting way to teach poetry, I caught some words and the beat of the new Simon and Garfunkel "Sounds of Silence" album. "I am a Rock, I am an Island" was spinning from my teenage daughter's stereo. There arose in my mind an instant rebuttal, Donne's "No Man Is an Island," and my introductory lesson began to take shape. Following came "Richard Cory" and "Dangling Conversation," two more springboards to the poems in our tenth grade anthology.

When I experienced the students' reaction to poetry heard through their own music, I realized that I had struck gold. The students not only enjoyed the unit, but they actually became involved.

The next year, I developed this approach into group work where students chose a topic of current concern and then found music and poems which expressed viewpoints relating to that topic. After several days of preparation, each group was given one class period to read their poems, play their music, and exchange viewpoints on their subject. Topics chosen included abortion, drug abuse, pollution, prejudice, and the war. I have been gratified by the perception and mature thinking evidenced in the group presentations and even a little amazed at the relationships students found between their music and the poetry. I had never thought of "The Death of a Ball Turret Gunner" by Randall Jarrell as relating to abortion; Langston Hughes' "Montage of a Dream Deferred" seemed written for a group discussion on prejudice; and poems by Ferlinghetti and Ignatow were found to deal with ecology and pollution.

The classroom was filled with sounds of Crosby, Stills, and Nash, James Taylor, Simon and Garfunkel, and the Beatles. It may not have looked or sounded like an English class for a few weeks, but I am convinced of one thing—the students in it were enjoying poetry.

Keystone Oaks High School
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Gertrude L. Downing

From the Literal to the Literary

On a September morning, three young teachers sat around the table of the English Office in Parsons Junior High School.* The cooperating teacher, Sandra Kaplan, described the dimensions of their curriculum task to her two student teachers, Joan Kasimatis and Gail Silverman. The course of study for the ninth year had been divided into four ten-week segments. Each teacher had responsibility for teaching one aspect of the design (film, drama, language structure, creative writing) on a rotating basis to all the classes in the grade. Mrs. Kaplan was to be instructor in the writing sequence.

The course of study with its sequential list of writing skills lay on the table beside the standard textbook replete with standard snatches from writings of standard authors. What more could one ask? Here was all the solid stuff on which to base a traditional course in writing.

But the four classes of adolescents assigned to this first cycle would not greet traditional approaches joyously. They represented a rich mixture of individuals diverse in interests, abilities, race and cultural background. And the teachers, who had been trained to question existing assumptions in the teaching of English, rejected the concept of piously teaching writing for its own sake. Just how much creative writing would these pupils be required to do in their remaining school years and, more importantly, in their adult lives? How could the basic techniques and disciplines of good writing be learned so that youngsters would recognize their importance in effective communication?

Agreement on Ends, Diversity in Means

The teaching triumvirate decided upon common goals to be achieved

*The school in Flushing, New York City, is affiliated with the Cooperative Teacher Education Project of the secondary education unit of Queens College Department of Education.

and basic writing skills to be emphasized. All members would subscribe to essentially the same sequence but each teacher would plan lessons independently of the others using her own unique interests and capabilities. Mrs. Kaplan would share instruction of the two morning classes with Gail Silverman and of the two afternoon classes with Joan Kasimatis, and the efforts would be evaluated afterward.

Since it was essential that the pupils recognize writing as reflective utterance and stored communication, learning experiences were designed to employ all the language arts. Listening, observing, thinking and speaking would precede writing. Reading, too, would sometimes present a concept but just as often would be a result when student creations were shared.

Samples of a Stimulating Melange

When Gail Silverman introduced a lesson by displaying a "Peanuts" cartoon, pupils were not aware that they would become poets during the next forty minutes. They listened avidly to the recording of "Happiness Is —" and in subsequent discussion had no difficulty in identifying the focus of the lyrics which, they then discovered, could be called "theme in poetry." And since the concept was already understood, there was no problem in defining the term. The teacher then asked them to think about their own feelings about secrets and each youngster wrote on a slip of paper his conviction about what "A secret is. . . ." And lo! When the slips of paper were collected and read, a communal poem had evolved. Collective authorship had yielded a creative work and poetry had become an exciting and achievable form of self expression. All pupils had looked, listened and thought; even the shy had spoken and the less talented had written.

One afternoon, the classroom became an art gallery. Groups of boys and girls were clustered around large color reproductions which Joan Kasimatis had posted strategically about the room. Then they returned to their seats to write descriptions of what they had seen. Classmates who had not viewed the same pictures worked at the chalkboard, attempting to sketch the basic composition of a work as each descriptive paragraph was read aloud. Reasons for the resulting difficulties were discussed and students decided that certain strategies could be employed to organize their descriptive details more effectively. And so they proceeded to write paragraphs, ordering details by location.

On another day, the class listened with uproarious appreciation to a recording of Allan Sherman's saga of the bargain-hunting woman, "Jump

Down, Spin Around." They moved along happily to reading and reacting to such commercials from *Mad Magazine* as "Toys and Games for the TV Ad Indoctrinated Child" and "The Mini-Stomach Chemistry Set." The cutting power of this humor was apparent to all, and the uses and means of satire were examined. From this launching, further exploration into political cartoons and satirical essays became a pleasant journey which culminated in the writing of some very heartfelt and incisive student paragraphs.

For anyone who has been exposed to the routine "five senses" writing assignment, one lesson on sensory impressions would have proven a revelation. Pupils listened to a passage by Helen Keller describing how she learned about the world about her. After a discussion of how blind persons must touch things with the fullest appreciation and with great care and concentration, each child was asked to pretend that he was blind as he came up to feel an object. After descriptive paragraphs were written, they were read to the class to see if the article could be identified. The acuity of the students' perceptions and the sensitive choice of words to describe the articles were remarkable.

A series of morning lessons opened with an artistic display of several interesting objects grouped on a colorful cloth. Pupils came up to view the arrangement and then wrote brief descriptions of what they had seen. As these paragraphs were read and discussed, it became apparent that each writer had emphasized a different aspect, such as color, shape, location. Two black and white illustrations (a Toulouse-Lautrec sketch and the classic Rubin vase) were studied to observe the influence of perception set, and the reading and discussion of an excerpt from *Gulliver's Travels* was another exercise in the study of point of view.

During this phase of the work, the afternoon classes were discovering the power of connotative meanings to convey a point of view. There was considerable amusement, undergirded by new understanding, when literal descriptions of individuals were compared with euphemistic presentations designed to "sell" these same persons as blind dates. Other class sessions were designed to examine point of view by describing conflicts between siblings or between parent and offspring from the vantage of each antagonist. (The student insight into parental behavior was remarkable in these paragraphs and revealed strong disapproval of overly-permissive elders!)

One very capable class extended the work on viewpoints to an examination of the evolution of pop culture. They did individual research and wrote essays on twentieth century developments in such things as

fashions, popular music and social dancing, and thus discovered the influence of historical context on tastes and attitudes. The culminating activity, a class party highlighting music, dress, and dances of the twenties, gave dramatic and enjoyable emphasis to their preparatory writings.

In Retrospect

Looking back (still *another* point of view), the youngsters who participated in the writing sequence readily admitted that they had enjoyed themselves and had learned a great deal not only about writing but also about the power of language to reveal thought and to influence behavior. They expressed disappointment, however, that the course had not made them "great writers."

The teachers agreed that they had not discovered any prodigious talents, but they felt that their charges had become more careful listeners, more astute observers, more reflective thinkers, more fluent speakers, and more willing and capable writers.

The Dividends of Cooperative Effort

While providing the assistance and security required by her novices, the cooperating teacher had given them the freedom to experiment and to capitalize on their individual talents and experiences. In so doing, the student teachers became not a burden but a professional stimulus. They were able to select materials which are particularly interesting to adolescents (pop and folk music, op art, etc.) but which are often unfamiliar to even slightly older teachers. They were encouraged to bring to the classroom insights gained in their college classes (balance and motion in poetry, for example) which stimulate new approaches to appreciation of literature in the secondary school.

Because of the rich professional talents in the combined endeavors of the three teachers, students experienced a wide variety of activities in listening, observing, thinking, speaking, reading and writing which were designed to achieve common goals. The youngsters were so interested in writing that a basic and rigorous sequence of skills was practiced not as an end in itself but as a means to more effective communication.

This teaching coalition has been dissolved by the graduation of the student teachers. But a new semester has begun, and a new student teacher is working on "theme in poetry." This time, the strains of Bob Dylan and of Simon and Garfunkel are heard in our classroom. So new approaches continue. Serendipity!

Queens College, The City University of New York
Flushing, New York

Ruth L. Oppner

Show Me

Many students who took my course in the introduction to poetry and drama last semester did not do so because they loved literature but because they could not get the course they wanted or were required to take a humanities course and just happened to choose mine. These "show me" students, with their "Why do we have to do this?" attitude, were challenging and were waiting to be challenged from the first day of class. The two goals I had set for the course, to make the reading come alive and to make the writing on the literature coherent, would be difficult to attain in the presence of this attitude, but I was determined to succeed.

Drama was introduced first to stimulate class interaction. The students enjoyed reading the modern play we read first but could not write about it abstractly or critically. The second assignment, "The Cherry Orchard," deepened the challenge. The students who knew Chekhov thought he was the most boring writer who ever practiced his trade. Since Chekhov seemed dated to them, having them create their own drama, one that could parallel a scene of Chekhov's, would be my point of departure.

The study plan was designed in two parts, one philosophic, one experiential. "Nothing ever happens" is a philosophic key to Chekhov. By giving the students some background in Chekhov's views of his society, and relating these to the wider currents of revolt and social change occurring around him, I provided a philosophic backdrop which temporarily placated these "show me" students.[1]

The experiential part of the study plan required some advance selection on my part. Although the plan was to let them think that they were

[1] Robert Brustein, *The Theatre of Revolt* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964): "Chekhov is equally adverse to religious affirmations: he is, perhaps, the most secular playwright in the entire theatre of revolt . . . Instead of dramatizing the death of God, Chekhov is content merely to suggest the metaphysical void and to analyze its consequences on human character." p. 146.

creating something wholly theirs, on the spot, I wanted ultimately to show them some connection between their spontaneous dramas and a scene from Chekhov. I searched for a brief one that would show Chekhov's sense of a "metaphysical void,"[2] and "its consequences on human character."[3] The opening of Act II formed a perfect vignette to show the crumbling old order yielding to the new. The scene was described as:

> *An old abandoned chapel in a field. Beside it are a well, an old bench and some tombstones . . . In the distance, a line of telegraph poles can be seen, . . .*[4]

The first three speeches, showing Chekhov's attitude toward the society of his day, would dictate the "game plan" for my students. I would allow them three characters and an imaginary guitar for a prop, without telling them they were modern day Chekhovs.

> CHARLOTTA: [*Thoughtfully*] I don't know how old I am. For you see, I haven't got a passport . . . but I keep pretending that I'm still very young . . . But where I come from and who I am, I don't know . . . I don't know anything. [*Pause*] I'm longing to talk to someone, but there isn't anybody. I haven't anybody . . .
>
> EPIHODOV: [*Plays the guitar and sings*] "What care I for the noisy world? . . . What care I for friends and foes?" How pleasant it is to play the mandolin!
>
> DUNYASHA: That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [*She looks at herself in a little mirror and powders her face.*][5]

The clerk playing the guitar cares only for himself; the young maid looking in the mirror sees only her own face; Charlotta laments her sense of isolation to herself. These are some of the faces of nineteenth and twentieth century modern man: the isolated, the pleasure seeker, the narcissist.

With Chekhov's scene in mind, I was ready to start the class. Before breaking into groups, we discussed the problem of a world view or philosophic framework. To keep it simple, I asked students to name some things or qualities we value in our society. *Money* rang out first, followed

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Anton Chekhov, "The Cherry Orchard," in *The Art of Drama*, ed. R. F. Dietrich, William E. Carpenter and Kevin Kerrane (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969), p. 352.

[5] Ibid., pp. 352-3.

by elements such as *freedom* and *identity*. I grouped them on the board in two columns which suggested differing values:

I	II
money	freedom
time	sensitivity
privacy	identity
success	happiness

Next, I told them that we would break into groups, that each group would invent a scene to dramatize the conflicting views noted on the board, and that each group would produce the scene with a narrator, three characters and a guitar. They decided, before breaking into groups, to have one character be female, two male. Although leaders emerged and took charge, and only half the group could do the acting, everyone had a voice in the planning. They were clearly "involved."

It took several minutes to get them to finish their dramas and to rearrange the chairs again in their sentry-line rows, a cold contrast to the friendly chaos of the informal groups. A quiet air of expectation preceded the first presentation, putting in mind the hush and awe that accompany the darkening of the theatre as the curtain goes up. The first group was introduced by one of the students:

NARRATOR: We're in a bank. This young man wants to get a loan. Let's see what happens.

YOUTH: [*Urgently*] Please. I've got to see the banker.

SECRETARY: I'm sorry, he's on long distance.

YOUTH: I've got to get this motorcycle by tomorrow. You can have my guitar 'til I get back.

At this moment, the banker appeared. The youth pleaded with him and was coldly turned down. The wrangling went back and forth as the class was convulsed with laughter at the melodramatic performance of their classmates.

The other groups also dramatized the concept of the generation gap. The elders represented materialism; youth represented adventure, or laziness. The dialogue had a didactic ring. For example, a father-son-mother tableau took place at the breakfast table. The mother stood by, not really an integral part:

FATHER: Your hair is a mess, your shirttails are out, you eat like a slob.

SON: Times are different, Dad.

FATHER: When are you going to get a new suit?

SON: Gee, Dad, can't you ever talk about the future?

FATHER: Sure, I'll talk about the future. When are you going to get a job?

SON: But Dad . . .

FATHER: And get your guitar off the table!

Their plays, however amateur, produced a camaraderie among the students that had a lasting effect on the atmosphere in the classroom; class discussions began to involve more students. The immediate discussion which followed my question—"What did you do?"—turned up the fact that each group dramatized the generation gap, selected a man to show the establishment and its preoccupation with money, jobs and success, and put youth in the position of seeking something different from the establishment.

"Did you show the positive values of youth?" I asked. A long argument followed, with the older students (including women old enough to be the students' mothers) defending their generation, saying their hard work made possible the school attendance of these same students. The young students argued back that they didn't care about the depression, they cared about "life now." Again I prodded them to see if their plays showed these differing values. It was obvious that their dramas left more unsaid than said.

The moment had come to turn their attention back to Chekhov, to the opening of Act II for comparison. A student read the stage directions. We noted how the abandoned church suggested the passing of the old faiths, how the lines of trees giving way to phone poles suggested the new technology. I called their attention to the first three speeches, showing the isolation, pleasure-seeking and self-involvement in one short minute of dialogue. The contrast to their stereotyped characters, who did little more than point up a generation gap, needed no comment. Instead I accented Chekhov's accomplishment. "It's like a water color; a few brush strokes and you have a whole scene. That shows the artistry of Chekhov. He says so much with so little." The silence in the classroom told me that new ideas were sinking in.

Now making a direct comparison to their scenes, I asked if a generation gap existed in Chekhov. This brought forth insights that the older generation (Charlotta, Madame Ranevsky) demonstrated foolishness, and

that the young were mixtures of wisdom and foolishness in differing ways. They also determined that one could not really generalize, that Chekhov's characters were wise and foolish, unpredictable, in short, *real*. Somehow, they had dissolved the generation gap themselves, from their original view that Chekhov wrote quaint period pieces, to viewing his work as drama with its relevant contemporary views. They also developed a new respect for the creative process, having just indulged in it themselves.

The pedagogical goal, to help them write a coherent essay on literature, still had to be served. The previous assignment showed that most of the students were not ready to write about literature in abstract terms. I needed to construct a primer assignment, one that would start with their own experiences, yet somehow relate to the play. I also wanted to force them to read the text carefully, a necessary preliminary to writing about it. I was looking for a connection, a link between "What do you see before your very eyes?" and "What do you think about it?"

The following assignment was typed on a ditto and given to each student. Note that the first task requires a careful reading of the text, the second requires careful observation of a living person, and the third requires the integration of the two, the association of a real person with an imaginary one.

Character in Action

Assignment: Write a one paragraph description of a person you observe in action. Choose someone that reminds you of one of the characters in the play, "The Cherry Orchard."

First Task: List several descriptive traits of one character from the play. Example:
EPIHODOV [*Enter Epihodov with a bouquet of flowers; he wears a jacket and brightly polished high boots which squeak loudly. As he enters he drops the flowers.*]

Second Task: Observe a person carefully.
1. Write down a physical description.
2. Write down in time sequence the motions of the person as he performs some task (squirming in a chair for a few minutes can be a "task").
3. Write down any sounds emanating from the person (dialogue, clomping of a heavy walk, rustling of clothing).

Third Task: Compose your paragraph. Discuss why the person you observed reminds you of _____ in the play (quote just enough to illustrate your connection). Work for vivid prose rendered in full sentences. Let one sentence lead logically to the next. If you shift attention, use a transitional phrase ("Chekhov's governess is as skinny as this nurse.").

The resulting papers were as lively as their plays. Their experiences with the scenes they had performed made them sharp observers of the scenes around them. They translated their close observations of someone into detailed, concrete language, using transitions, and quoting passages from the play. A sample paper follows:

Grandfather's Hands

> My grandfather is eighty-nine years old. When he was born the world was a different place. He is a man of a different time, just as Feers in Anton Chekhov's play was a man who had outlived the world he knew . . . "These young people! My life's slipped by as if I'd never lived" . . . I think what he meant was that his world had slipped by as though it had never existed, things being so different now. My grandfather is aware that things are different now. His large hands, with leathery, tight skin, friendly in a handshake but strong and capable, tell us of a time when a man had to have strong hands to hold the reins of the work horse. His nose and ears are too big to fit his shrunken face, but they show that once there was a face and body to fit their giant size. Two eyes peer out of whirlpools of wrinkled skin. They are faded, light blue, old, yet intent with intelligence. The body is old yet radiates great strength like a rusting, old steam locomotive. He walks with crutches, as his legs are giving out. Each step is sure and cautious, as he carefully places his feet like a blind man feeling out the terrain in his path. Each crutch is held in place by a large leathery claw, knuckles bulging, veins large, mapping out the old blood's path. Their grip is sure and determined just as the face is determined.
>
> There can be seen a terrific life force carrying this old man past the life he knew. The vitality of his life has such momentum and inertia that it carries the old frame on, past the world it knew.

Thus, my two goals were served: the literature came to life, and the students' writing on the literature began to make sense. The class maintained its "show me" attitude, but I turned it around to "show yourself."

San Fernando Valley State College
Northridge, California

Liane Brandon

Creative Use of Media

The following are suggestions for ways to enrich the language, literature, and life experiences in the classroom through media.

Still Photography

(Use anything that will take a picture—Brownie cameras, box cameras, Instamatics, etc.)

1. Photograph one object in six different ways.
   Describe something as if you were six different people.
2. Alter an object through lighting.
   Alter a description by using synonyms with different shades of meaning.
3. Photograph someone in six different moods.
   Create a character and show six facets of his or her personality.
4. Photograph details, shapes, or patterns.
   Describe in writing what you have photographed.
5. Experiment with sequence or narrative photography.
   Write a narrative or poetic text for your photographs.
6. Experiment with cropping a picture.
   Omit certain details from a news story or description. What happens?
7. Try making a slide-tape.
   Add optical and sound effects to something you've written.
8. Experiment with abstract photography.
   Create a similar mood with words. Try putting them together.
9. Illustrate a story or poem.
   Write a story or poem to illustrate.

Sound

(Borrow the school tape recorder and ask someone to teach you to edit; it takes five minutes to learn)

1. Record your favorite sounds, words, or poems.
   Listen to your own voice. Listen to yourself read.
2. Experiment with setting a variety of sounds to a particular picture or series.
   Read aloud to different musical or sound backgrounds.
3. Experiment with sound recorded and played at different speeds.
   Read or talk at different speeds. What effect does it have on others?
4. Collect sound at different locations.
   Describe the sounds you associate with shopping, home, football games, etc.
5. Record and edit a live interview. Select the most representative statements.
   Write up the interview, selecting the most representative statements.
6. Record and compare newscasts from different networks.
   Describe your conclusions.
7. Create your own radio broadcast and tape it.
   Write, organize, and perform a broadcast for the class.
8. Create sound montages by editing.
   Create poetic montages by mixing sound, color, and feeling words.

Film

(Use anything available: home movie equipment, old news clips, home movies, discarded TV footage or commercials, etc.)

1. Re-edit any old film available to produce a new effect.
   Edit, combine or juxtapose written news, ads, stories, and words to produce a new effect.
2. Shoot a moving object at different speeds.
   Rewrite a paragraph changing sentence length and rhythm.
3. Shoot an object using closeup, medium, and long shots.
   Describe an object from different points in time, space, mood, etc.
4. Shoot for textures, tones, and form.
   Write for textures, tones, and form.
5. Shoot the same sequence objectively and subjectively.
   Write about an event objectively and subjectively.
6. Plan and shoot a short narrative sequence without words.
   Write and organize a shooting script for your film.
7. Film your visual interpretation of a story, poem or song.

Write the story, poem, or song.

8. Draw on clear film and project it. Add music or sound.
   Compare the result to abstract art, experimental music, poetry.
9. Experiment with flip cards, pixillation, montages, animation, sets, cartoons, puppets, statues, drawings, etc.
   Write stories, plays, dialogues, encounters, situations, etc. for imaginary characters.

Television and Video Tape Recording

1. Bring a TV set to class. Turn it on. Watch anything.
   Who is the program for? What kind of people are portrayed? How do they relate to each other? What are their values? What role stereotypes do they depict? project? What is prime time? programming? NET?

   What kind of language is used? Not used? Accents? Inflections? Colloquialisms? Cliches? How much talking is done? Are you affected more by what you see or by what you hear?

   When are certain commercials shown? Who is their audience? What claims do they make? What do they promise? What needs, wishes, desires, or fantasies do they build on? exploit?

   Create your own programs, commercials, serials.
2. Video tape yourself.
   Write about your reaction to seeing yourself.
3. Try role-playing.
   Create role-playing situations. Watch people. How do they react in different situations?
4. Tape improvised characters in various situations.
   Write short plays for TV production.
5. Produce two groups' versions of the same play.
   Discuss or write about the similarities and differences in interpretation.
6. Prepare the same play for video taping, filming, audio taping and live performance.
   How are the productions similar? different? Does the medium affect the message?
7. Begin a video tape collection of good programs for your school.
   Write a short review of each program.

North Quincy High School
Quincy, Massachusetts

Anne W. Dodd

Language Study Comes Alive

As an experimental project in one of my English classes, I decided to give the students a chance to improve their understanding of what language is and how it operates by creating a new language for themselves.

After we had discussed some of the inconsistencies and irregularities of English spelling and structure, I divided the class into three groups of eight students. They were given two months to develop a simple language of their own. Each group was responsible for presenting a sound system, dictionary, and grammar for its language to the rest of the class and demonstrating its language by using it in a skit.

At first everyone was excited about how much fun creating the languages would be. Their enthusiasm was dampened only slightly when they realized how much work the project actually necessitated. One group didn't fare as well as the other two. It lacked a strong leader and ideas to get started. Although I helped these students more than the others, their lack of leadership and group ambition kept them from really getting involved in the project. In contrast, the other two groups were soon uttering words in their languages throughout the school, causing students and teachers to regard them curiously.

The languages the groups developed were neither complete nor perfect, but they did demonstrate the students' creativity and interest in simplicity. At first glance the languages seem more complicated than English; in fact, they are less complex. The students for the most part relied on the basic structure of English. They really had no knowledge of other languages except a couple of years of high school French.

Perhaps as important as the involvement with language for the students was their immersion in a small group experience. Each group chose a chairman and a secretary. They conducted their meetings as they wished, making individual assignments for members and discussing and discarding

numerous ideas before agreeing on what to include. I merely listened in occasionally and gave a few suggestions about what they were doing and how they were doing it.

The group presentations at the end of the project were entertaining and informative. The language project accomplished far more than the routine exercises the students had written for years in English classes. They learned a little more about language, a great deal more about group dynamics, and they had fun doing it. I would try this assignment again, but I would make two changes: I would make sure I included a strong leader in each group, and I would get material on Esperanto (an international language) for class study before beginning the actual creation of the language. (A kit on Esperanto may be obtained for $3.00 from Esperanto Library, Middleton, Wisconsin 53562.)

Machias Memorial High School
Machias, Maine

Summaries of Languages Created

Group A: (This group was the one that had all the problems getting started. Their language attests to this fact.) No name given for language.

1. The punctuation is the same as English.
2. All vowels are pronounced long.
3. All articles are eliminated.
4. Words are established by coding the regular alphabet (except vowels), e.g., G=B. The English words were kept except for a new spelling. *Cat* in this language would be *ras* (long *a*).

Group B: Language name–IMEN

1. All unnecessary letters and words are eliminated. English words are used.
2. The words are spelled the way they are pronounced.
3. Alphabet: A B D E F G H J K L M N O P R S T U V W X Y Z
   Soft C=S; hard C=K; no I except pronoun; all vowels are included, but are always long.)
4. All writing is print and only capital letters are used.
5. Only three tenses are used: present, past, and future. Tenses are shown by YK, AK, UK.
   Example: "I run fast" in IMEN would be "YK. I RUN FAST."
   "I ran fast" would be "AK. I RUN FAST."
   "I will run fast" would be "UK. I RUN FAST."
6. Words with opposite meanings are the same words with "E" added:
   up=UP; down=UPE

7. Personal pronouns are the same in the adjective forms.
8. Possessive form is always 'S.

Group C: Language name—Veda

1. Alphabet: a b d e f i j k l m n o p r s t u v w
2. All vowels are long.
3. Words are one or two syllables only. (New words were created by this group.)
4. Nouns are made plural by adding "o" to the singular.
5. Pronouns (he, she, it, etc.) also mean him, her, his, hers, etc.
6. There are only three tenses: present, past, and future. Example: "om" means need. This form is the present. The past is formed by adding "a" (oma); the future is formed by adding "u" (omu).
7. Unnecessary words, such as articles, are omitted.

Isidore Levine

Increasing Class Participation through Group Expression

Some of the present weaknesses of the developmental lesson in literature and language stem from the fact that the teacher is the focus of attention. Traditionally, classroom procedure means that the teacher stands while the pupils sit, thus creating the conditions which foster the lecture method where student participation is often reduced to a minimum. And yet we know that without the sophistication a teacher can provide, student discussions on literature can be shallow or meaningless. To offset the weakness of excessive teacher talk, instructors are advised to create stimulating questions for discussion. Thus, through pointed queries, the class is led to formulate an aim, provide insights into literary selections, arrive at medial summaries, and finally solve the problem appropriate to the aim.

With experience the teacher may learn to wait confidently for his students to participate in the discussions on literature, even when his questions do not stimulate the superior pupil immediately. However, the tendency to enlighten pupils often compels a teacher to phrase and rephrase his responses or to impart outright answers when the student hesitates or falters. To overcome this weakness, some teachers have begun to use the unstructured lesson in an effort to foster pupil participation. In that procedure, usually undertaken with bright pupils, the instructor makes no plans but depends on the class to engage in discussion of any topic they initiate. He merely acts as a moderator. These planless periods also have weaknesses that quickly become obvious to the practitioner. Still other teachers arrange pupil seats in a circle so that students face one another instead of all facing the teacher. In the latter case, the focus on the teacher is reduced but not avoided.

The philosophy underlying a procedure which is between the lecture and the unstructured lesson encompasses a number of theories and practices, none of them new. Among these are the following:

1. Listening is not the most effective method of learning despite its 4000 year tradition. Students learn best when they are expressing themselves verbally and rationalizing their convictions.
2. Silent reading can be habituated by pupils when the teacher supervises the activity during class time.
3. Individual reports on any aspect of literature are desirable but difficult to obtain and uneconomical in time needed for them.
4. Students will be less nervous about being the focus of their peers if they are members of small groups standing before their classmates.
5. Responsibility for certain learnings will stimulate greater student effort.
6. Teacher talk should be reduced to a minimum commensurate with the objectives of a given lesson.

With the above in mind, the teacher can implement the following method after discussion with the students. Each day a different row of pupils will be responsible for a lesson. They will prepare for the discussion by in-class reading of an essay, a short story, a poem or two, or a chapter in a novel. On the day assigned, they will take the place of the teacher in front of the room and give their individual reactions to the literature studied.

Let us suppose that the class is studying *Lord of the Flies*. The first day the teacher will assign each row some 10-15 pages as a meaningful unit of the narrative. All the pupils will read the opening chapter in class so that they will be familiar with this introduction to the story. The second day the first row of five to seven pupils will come before the class and express their reactions to the first half of the chapter, which deals with the awakening friendship between Ralph and Piggy and the finding of the conch.

If each student is silent hoping that someone else will begin, the teacher, who is sitting with the rest of the class, can call on one to say anything that comes to his mind about the chapter. In most cases, the pupils will merely recite the actions of the characters—two boys met and talked about a plane, about their new surroundings, and about some personal feelings—but something the first student says might stir another member of the group to speak. Before long, another youngster will volunteer some information or an opinion. The teacher should be ready to call on a pupil who has not contributed thus far. But it will quickly become apparent that competition will compel each student to make some remark.

The audience should be urged to participate thereafter either through questions or opinions on the facts and convictions heard earlier. If no student broaches the significance of an unsupervised group of boys on an

island, the teacher should be prepared with a list of questions highlighting the essential meanings of the events, the scenes, and the human struggle to be anticipated.

The third day the period will begin with silent reading of the second part of the chapter for some five or ten minutes as a refresher. The second group of students will then come to the front of the room with their books. Again the seated students will participate only after the group has finished or when a question cannot be answered by the "experts" up front. The books will be used to check on details brought to the attention of the class when such items of information are vital to an interpretation or can settle an argument. The remainder of the book can be similarly treated until the novel has been thoroughly explored by the pupils.

Students can be invited to formulate questions for the groups, the period for silent reading can be lengthened or shortened in accordance with the substance of the chapter, and the preparation needed by the responsible students can take the form of written reports if any individual wishes to discuss any point at length. At times the audience may wish to evaluate the report of a group.

Experience with this procedure revealed these problems and satisfying results.

1. The development of subtle understandings of character and plot was somewhat slow. Patience was a partial solution.
2. Recording marks for individuals when they were before the class only once a week was not easy. Impressions must take the place of exact grades.
3. The more articulate students tended to monopolize the discussion. An agreement was made to limit all speeches to a maximum of two minutes. It was explained that two minutes would be enough for a few hundred words.
4. All students participated actively once a week and seemed to enjoy the responsibility, judging by the minimum of complaints.
5. Students read a few thousand words daily in preparation for the reports. The number of students who read ahead voluntarily reached almost 100 percent.
6. The student became the focus of attention. The teacher was regarded as an adviser whose viewpoint could be questioned and even rejected.
7. Disagreements among students on matters of fact and opinion were frequent and usually enlightening.
8. Tests, based on chapters discussed, revealed reactions not always considered during reporting periods. Apparently these discussions stimulated out of class thinking.

W. C. Bryant High School
Long Island City, New York

Rena Carter

Word Collecting: A Hobby for Fun and Profit

The collecting instinct burgeons in the human species. Fortunes have been spent in acquiring rare stamps, coins, paintings, and, lately, model cars and planes. But a hobby, which can prove far more rewarding and utile than any of the above, is available at practically no financial outlay. With the acquisition of a good thesaurus, a comprehensive dictionary, and a copy of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, the neophyte can start a word and phrase collection which will enable him to spend countless enjoyable hours reading, learning to speak and write effectively, and adding to his accumulation of treasures.

The thesaurus, when used at all in language arts classrooms, is most often referred to as a book of synonyms. Yet we know that there are few pairs of words in our language which can be interchanged with impunity. One student of mine, wishing to make a good impression, once wrote, "How do you receive to Orchard Street from here?" When I questioned her, she explained, "I looked up *get* in a thesaurus and one of the synonyms was *receive*." Now we play games with a thesaurus in my classrooms, the object of which is to ascertain the shades of meaning of the various synonyms listed in the volume. Students collect sentences in which the meaning has been distorted by the incorrect use of a so-called synonym.

One practice which is often employed by language arts teachers does to the dictionary what some assignments do to museums: make them instruments of agonizing boredom. The teacher gives the students a list of unrelated and colorless words and instructs them to get their definitions from the dictionary. As a result of such an assignment I have seen such definitions as "the act of prevaricating" and "falsifying" for *prevarication*. Examination revealed what should have been obvious, that the student knew no more about the meaning of *prevarication* after he had completed the assignment than he had before. Even those who submitted "lying" as a definition were not sure whether the word referred to an untruth

or simply to a reclining position. Meaningful selection of words to be looked up from an experiential situation, and careful explanation of the techniques involved in the use of the dictionary, developed by student experience, can awaken genuine enthusiasm for word collection.

The most common use of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* has been to determine the source of a quotation. It can be even more valuable as a phrase and idea pantry, from which can be drawn the pithy expressions of great thinkers of the ages on a given topic. For instance, in teaching about love poetry, the instructor can avoid the moon-June response by discussing with his class all the lines to be found under *love* in the index. Many will already be familiar to the students: "Greater love hath no man," and "Love is blind." More will offer new insights: "Love and I had the wit to win," and "How do I love thee?" Many a profitable and happy lesson can grow from the students' demands to hear the whole poem from which a line is quoted, the same poem which bored them when read cold by a dutiful teacher.

A word of caution must be interjected here. The extent of attrition of vocabulary today may come as a shock to the unwary teacher. Few indeed are the students who know, for example, the meaning of the word *thee*. When I asked a seventh grade class of average ability the meaning of this word, I elicited responses such as the following:

"It means *the*."
"It means *my country*."
"I know! It means *these*."

With care and, more important, enthusiasm, the language arts teacher can instill in his pupils a love of words and phrases which will lead to clear and vivid self-expression, exact comprehension, conventional grammar, correct spelling, and, best of all, easily obtainable and profitable pleasure in their discovery of the art of language.

New York City Board of Education
Bellerose, New York

Morton D. Rich

Methodical Madness in a Methods Class

The procedures, techniques, and methods discussed here were used during a summer session class composed of students who needed a methods course to earn a state certificate for the teaching of secondary school English. All but three of the thirty-six students had already earned a B.A. degree, almost half were over thirty, and four or five were over forty. Many of the students arrived with unpleasant preconceptions about what to expect from a methods class, especially at a state college, but before a week had passed, all had changed their minds.

Required reading included James Moffett's *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), to be read by the end of the fifth week, and at least six articles, each addressed to a different problem or area, published in the *English Journal* during the last decade.

Required writing consisted of three precis and three critiques of *English Journal* articles chosen by the student and an essay, unit plan, or curriculum proposal in outline, focused on a teaching situation the student expected or hoped to encounter.

During the six weeks the course met, the students and professor discussed the teaching of grammar, composition, literature, and film and filmmaking, but most frequently the topic was people—students as persons, never as "eighth-grade C track."

The people who met together five mornings a week for six weeks taught each other, with some help from a loving, manipulating guru, also known as an assistant professor of English. Personal interaction provided the means by which individuals learned to deal with a wide variety of teaching-learning experiences. Lectures were presented once or twice each week, when the professor and students saw the need for a compressed, comprehensive look at some area not easily reviewed by some other means. The professor accepted questions during the lectures, and if

an answer generated discussion among students, the professor modulated from lecturer to discussion leader. Such informality helped develop and maintain openness among the students and with the teacher, so that the sense of being a group, rather than an aggregate, became stronger as the summer progressed.

More direct and continuous interaction was effected by dividing the class of thirty-six into four groups of nine each. During the first week, each group served as a demonstration class so that the professor could show some approaches to students and materials. Each demonstration group decided, without suggestion or interference, how they would perform in order to offer a challenging situation to their demonstration teacher. It was these planning times that brought individuals in the class into closer contact, resulting in a feeling of cohesiveness early in the semester. The same groups of nine were convened at least twice each week, always with valuable teaching-learning experiences resulting. Results from four simultaneous discussions of "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" offer a good illustration: The class was asked to read (presumably re-read) Stephen Crane's story prior to a given date; no other instructions were given. Upon arriving for class, the four groups were asked to meet and come to a conclusion about this problem: "What sort of short film could be developed from this story? Plan a sequence of scenes, using dialogue from the story." The results were quite interesting. Groups A and B simply followed the story as given, offering visuals faithfully adhering to Crane's story. Group C found symbolic values in certain details that are repeated by Crane, and began to develop an imaginative scenario that departed from a literal interpretation of the story. Group D wrote a scenario on the spot, à la "West Side Story," and presented it to the class without rehearsal. Spontaneous creations resulting from forty minutes of intense small-group work!

The students who comprise the class help determine the response that can be generated from the teacher-leader-guru. In the summer session class, almost half of the students were over thirty years of age, and most of them were fully willing to speak their minds and risk receiving reactions. Some of the under-thirty students tried vocalizing after they saw that the teacher welcomed expression of diverse views and that the class, though still an aggregate rather than a unified group, did not shoot darts as answers, but only wads of cotton. When mild responses later became encouraging responses, the aggregate had moved toward becoming a group. The original request for openness from the teacher, followed

by openness from one and then another population in the class, led to increased openness on the part of the teacher, which in turn promoted more openness from diverse individuals in the class. (In contrast, the fall semester class, meeting twice each week for fifteen weeks rather than daily for six weeks, and being homogeneous in age, was generally less responsive to invitations to be open, but did respond to a structured sensitivity exercise.)

The teacher had to be floor manager and bringer of all light until one student realized that the opportunity for shared leadership was real and available. Then improvised drama and role-playing became useful media for deeper, more open self-expression. Many students expressed delighted shock at the exhilaration that followed role-playing and most wanted additional class time for further experimentation. Two groups found themselves in roles that were evidently responses to old needs or problems, and they went on, oblivious to changes in the classroom around them. The reality of what they did helped at least one young woman solve a nagging problem with her current roommate.

How does this relate to the preparation of teachers of English? These students participated in the birth of several dramatic pieces and, through subsequent discussion, came to understand the genesis of drama—conflict. They also felt alive, really alive, in an English classroom, a "methods" classroom to boot!

These incidents illustrated to the students involved the basic principles of the student-centered classroom. Activities were generated from the students' interests and concerns, so the classroom became a place to pose problems and seek solutions. The curriculum evolved from the professor's experience applied to the students' perceptions of English classrooms, what they are and what they could become. Because theory and practice were interwoven in these classes, a better prepared, more enthusiastic group of neophyte English teachers was launched into the field.

Montclair State College
Montclair, New Jersey

William P. Ferris

The Trial of George Milton

One day last fall George Milton went on trial for his life. The charge he faced was the pre-meditated murder of Lennie Small with a stolen Luger. In fact, he went on trial in three different classes.

The sophomore English curriculum called for us to read John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. One question that always inspires a great deal of discussion in connection with Steinbeck's book is whether George did the right thing in mercy-killing his retarded friend. Steinbeck obviously wants us to think so, but this has never stopped students from questioning the point. So, I thought, why not role-play some democracy-in-action and put a tenth grade George Milton on trial for murder?

But this was going to require some careful preparation to work well. I decided it would be a good idea to take a field trip to see a real trial. At the County Superior Court we heard a special talk from the judge, saw several arraignments, and observed part of the trial of a young father for the sale of heroin.

Afterwards, I introduced the question of Lennie's death, and there was a predictable split of opinion. I asked what would happen to George under normal circumstances. We worked out the possibilities: first degree murder—pre-meditated homicide, for which one is executed in our state; second degree murder—homicide in a fit of passion, for which one is imprisoned for life; voluntary manslaughter—homicide, usually in a spontaneous fight, for which one receives a short jail term; involuntary manslaughter—accidental homicide, as when speeding in an automobile, for which one receives a short jail term; or simple self-defense. Though everyone agreed George would have to be tried, some would try him for first degree murder and some for voluntary manslaughter. For purposes of our classes I assumed the state would try him for first degree murder, and I took volunteers for the cast of characters we would need—a judge, a prosecuting attorney, a defense attorney, a George, a Slim, a Curley, a

Candy, a Carlson, and a jury. The basic ground rule was that no evidence of a factual sort could be introduced unless it was substantiated in the book. Accordingly, the book was presented to the bench as Exhibit A, and it was up to the appropriate attorney to object if seemingly inadmissible evidence came up.

The trial took two days and then it was time for the jury to begin what were to be "public deliberations." The jury was to deliberate with the trial principals allowed to watch *in silence*. This was a very frustrating learning experience for the principals because members of the jury would often argue fallaciously or simply confuse actual testimony, yet the principals had to remain quiet. The juries took between one and two days to decide. In one case, two people who had comprised the minority on the first ballot ultimately converted the rest. In another case, one girl refused to go along with the others for a long time, but the social pressures resulting from such a course finally took their toll. By the way, a great follow-up to this might have been the study of the play *Twelve Angry Men*.

Oh, the verdict? In two classes, George was innocent of first degree murder (though guilty of voluntary manslaughter) while in the third he was found guilty as charged. The prosecutor had done a superlative job in the third class while the defense attorneys had done better in the other two.

All three classes—and they included both a top and a bottom ability level—liked the idea so much that they insisted on doing it again for another book or story. In fact, two of the losers even wanted to have another crack at the same trial! However, we decided instead to allow those who had been on the jury to become the principals in the next trial which, as it happened, came up soon after in connection with a short story we read.

The truth is that there are a great many novels and stories for which it is possible to hold trials, or, if the teacher wishes, this can be done without a literature base. The local newspaper or television station could be tried for distorting the news, or the President of the United States for interceding in the affairs of another nation, just two among countless interesting topics that could supply ample material for sharpening discussion and speech techniques.

One of the major benefits, in my opinion, is the enthusiasm and feeling of togetherness generated in a class whose students are doing something different and beyond what they expect. It creates a healthy atmosphere that is conducive to real learning. And by putting the emphasis

on group projects it helps minimize the individual's fear of failure. Even though one attorney may "lose" the trial, it is not taken as seriously as the more usual academic or discipline failure—after all, he is a hero even to have undertaken the case.

The whole trial technique, then, is both a psychological device to enhance the learning atmosphere in a class and an educational device to make classes more student-centered and interesting in their discussions. It should be added in with panel discussions, movie and videotape projects, class newspapers and literary magazines, class created slide-tape shows, and other activities, to make an English class more profitable and its students enthusiastic about literature and communication.

Longmeadow High School
Longmeadow, Massachusetts

Eileen Tway

The 'Writing' Teacher

Creative writing for children is very much accepted now as a worthwhile school experience. Teachers have many resources to help them know ways to motivate children to write creatively, but an important consideration of the creative writing experience seems to be neglected. Does the teacher himself (or herself) write? If creative writing is so good for the children, why isn't it good for the teacher? It would certainly be good for the teacher to sit down and write with the class for a number of reasons: he can experience the joys and frustrations of creation that he is asking the children to experience; he can share in a class activity that should bring him closer to his pupils; and he can show by his actions that he values the writing experience.

It is difficult, of course, for the elementary teacher to sit for long and write, when the children need help with spelling and half-formed ideas. But even if the teacher writes only a paragraph, the message will be loud and clear. Some teachers even share their writings with their pupils. Sometimes the teacher's writing is included in the duplicated booklets of class stories and poems. But writing *with* the children is the important thing; it does not matter so much whether the product is shared.

A teacher who writes with the class discovers firsthand the problems a writer faces: how to begin, how to organize, what point of view to take, how to resolve the problem of the story, and how to know when the end is reached. The "writing" teacher also discovers the satisfaction to be found in creating a story.

On a recent April Fool's Day, when some children and teachers sat down together to write a story based on some nonsensical words, one teacher wrote the following:

> Stom and Bexxy had no school today; it was a teachers meeting day. Bexxy said to Stom as they were lazily walking down the street,

"I feel so very threar today! There is nothing at all to do! Why don't we go looking around for something to do?"

Now these children lived in the Western part of the country where there were many mountains. About a mile from their town were the foothills of the Bludlingal Mountains, and right there was also located a tremendous cranger. The children had often been warned not to venture near this cranger—it was long and deep and dark, and a little boy or girl who might fall into it would very likely be skippalated forever!

Bexxy was feeling very brave as she approached the cranger, but Stom realized that she was certainly not being brave; in fact, she was being very wappish! He grabbed her arm and said, "Okay, Bexxy, let's stop this moppelrig and go back to town. We can go to the ice cream store and split a big timrak with a cherry on top!"

Bexxy agreed in a blax and gave up her idea of exploring the cranger. So she and Stom returned to town and enjoyed their delicious timrak and this story ended happily! How did you think it would end?

When the teacher was finished, she had an overwhelming urge to read the story to the class, but the children were having so much fun that she restrained herself.

One of the children who was having such a great time wrote this story:

"Cranger, the Colorful Animal"

Once upon a time a long, long time ago there lived a cranger. This cranger had 1½ heads and 3½ legs which was hard, and he had 2½ eyes and 1½ ears and no tail. His hair was red, yellow, blue, green, purple, white, orange, brown, and black. He was a very colorful animal. And he liked any kind of food that was around. He was the only one of his kind, which he did not like.

He lived in the slopes of Switzerland. But, anyway, he did make a friend. The name of his friend was Threar (I don't know what his friend looked like, because I only saw Cranger and he only told me his name.). Now Cranger was a very playful animal. One day he was rolling down a little path when a rock let loose and Cranger went rolling down the mountain, and when he landed, he hit his 1½ heads and didn't remember a thing, so he lost his best friend, Threar. And he also lost his home.

But he found another friend, and his name was Bludlingal. (I don't know what he looked like either.) And Bludlingal had a friend named Stom, and Stom had a friend named Bexxy, so he lived happy forever.

As a language arts teacher and "instigator" of the above experience, I

reproduced some representative stories and we all had a language happening, seeing the various meanings and usages given to the nonsense words by adults and children. One ten-year-old made Bexxy a bee that was a hexing bee. A boy made a fight be a cranger one, the crangerest fight you ever did see. An adult made Cranger into a mysterious monster. A child that loves cars made Bexxy into an old model T Ford with a threar that always got stuck in third or first. The writers talked to each other and shared ideas as they wrote, but each took the words and gave them his own unique treatment and emerged with a delightfully different story.

The shared writing experience is one more personal contact that teachers can have with the children's world of the classroom. In this personal contact, the teacher shows by writing with the children, even more than by just encouraging the children to write, his or her own enjoyment of language, and this enjoyment is highly contagious.

Miami University
Oxford, Ohio

What's It All About, Man?

Programs crackle as the house lights lower and the curtains part for the first of twelve one-act plays written, directed, and performed by students.

"That's What It's All About, Man; That's What It's All About" takes place on a bare stage. Two young men dressed exactly alike in black tights, walking in step together in exaggerated mime technique, speak in turn with dialog accented rhythmically.

> "You sée those fréaks at the céntер, mán?"
>
> "Yéah, mán, at the céntер, mán."
>
> "Júst like a hérd of shéep, mán."
>
> "Júst like a hérd of shéep . . ."

This two minute social commentary on conformity today uses techniques of scansion in dramatic performance to emphasize the theme.

"The Dragon" is next, a modern fairytale on the eugenic characteristics of a dragon and a princess. It contains the traditional use of magic, threat of violence, amorality, and entertainment in language use. When the princess accepts the dragon's hand in marriage, there is "a pregnant pause" before the final line as the dragon shouts, "Grandmother, better make those booties with six toes!"

A bitter note can be detected in "The Final Product," in which a man and wife have an argument over his job. He has just become a salesman for war. The universal wife and mother protests; the salesman counters, "There has to be a demand for it. A market for the product. It has to be something people will use, will buy. That thing is WAR!" The wife replies, "Last time it was Peace. No one bought it." The language of the street emphasizes the playwright's sense of futility in an age-old theme.

Nine other plays follow in rapid succession, on subjects that range from senatorial corruption to an argument between God and Satan and a moving monologue by an old man at death.

The last curtain call closes the performance, and another Public Schools Week show is over in the high school. It has become a popular event with parents and members of the community who can find out there if nowhere else what their children and young neighbors are thinking. It has become popular, too, with students, who take entire responsibility for the performance from playwriting to performing, and with two teachers (one who specializes in composition and one in dramatics), who jointly feel the joys of watching students take responsibility and become excited about language.

How does a student show affect language? First, students who write for production feel a sense of commitment to words and to implications. They must learn to differentiate between the "real" conversations that people daily use and the focused dialog essential to dramatic impact. They must feel a sense of development or fragmentation implicit in a theme. They must create characters who speak with convincing motivation. They must learn to convey stage movement in terse, economical terms for purposes of performance. Secondly, students who act or direct or crew for performance must zero in on the writer's theme, his characters, his words and his implications. They must become conscious of the speaking, not the reading, of lines. They must learn to listen to the rhythms of the character's life as reflected in the lines and speeches. Finally, students who participate in any way in live theater, whether as authors, actors, directors, or crew, learn the essentials of communication—the tripartite union of giver, message, and receptor as the audience receives the playwright's message through the medium of the actor's interpretation.

How can a teacher of composition and a teacher of drama create such individual commitment to language by means of a group endeavor for 200 students? They plan. For the writers, they plan group activities focused on idea-getting, on techniques of monolog and dialog, and on character orchestration. Writers thus teach skills to actors as actors perform the writers' first scenes, and actors teach further skills to writers by performance of them. Part of the planning is that while self-directed study is the activity for the group, individual conferences and coaching become a one-to-one reality. The teachers also plan the joint selection of plays for performance by all the writers and actors, at which time 12 are chosen. Then the planning emphasis shifts to the performers who

have to make the subtleties of language come alive on stage. The writers then learn stage techniques from the drama students. That they manage to do so with ten gallons of cheap paint to refurbish leftover flats, fifty yards of muslin from which to make costumes, and a total financial investment of $62.87 ½ is an indication of their commitment to the power of language, the right word spoken well, and to the importance of seeing each other face to face—student to teacher, writer to actor, actor to audience.

Alhambra High School
Martinez, California

SHARON G. HANSFORD

"Ghost"

"Ghost" is a spelling game played with any number of participants. An impartial student mans a dictionary as consultant, and a player records the letters called. Players are assigned a regular order of rotation. The first player chooses any letter. Each successive player adds a letter, attempting to form a word, while avoiding completion of a word. All English words with three or more letters that are not capitalized, abbreviated, or hyphenated are acceptable.

Each player begins the game with five points, and if he spells a word or is challenged successfully, one point is taken away and the letter g is added after his name. When the entire word *ghost* appears beside his name, he is out. Should a player doubt the spelling or the existence of a word being formed, he may challenge the previous player, who is then responsible for spelling a word correctly with the letters before him. After this, the next player begins a new word.

"Ghost" is an old game my students always enjoy. They manipulate words handily, reveal much of their spoken and sight vocabularies, gain real consciousness of spelling and meaning, interact aggressively, and learn quickly from one another.

I play "Ghost," too. It's fun to watch the letter *e* become a *crayon*, *crawfish*, or *catastrophe*, and to be part of the action!

Warren Easton High School
New Orleans, Louisiana

Zora Rashkis

Creativity in English

Creativity in the English classroom is a highly subjective concept. Each of us expresses himself differently. It is the uniqueness of you—as an individual—that makes your class different from those of other teachers. But there is no reason why, if someone originated an idea that you like, you should not try it, too. And often, in using a "borrowed" idea, you trigger something in your own creative makeup that gives birth to a brand new workable idea.

Students will look forward to a poetry study if they know that at a specified time they will all go out to the park, sit under the trees on blankets or grass, and listen to one another as each reads his favorite poem to a musical background. We've had guitar, flute, tom-tom, stereo-tapes, and records as accompaniment. Part of the program is always group choral speaking, some is the original poetry of group members, and some is the singing of modern ballads.

In doing an autobiography, the students can be told that a month hence their papers will be due and that they may be done with photography to enrich them. Instead of just writing about a favorite friend or location or parent, there can be a photo that illustrates exactly what the writer means to say. Usually these illustrated papers are clever and trigger many individual responses.

Show me a student who isn't interested in good food! Each time we study a unit, we have a farewell dinner as we leave the project. At the close of the *Odyssey,* we donned sandals and sheets and sat on the cushioned floor eating our way through a Greek meal researched, planned, and cooked by members of the class. From things each person said or did, we were to guess who he was. Our menu: Greek meat balls (keftethes), spinach rice (spanakorizo), Greek salad (salata), baked lamb and eggplant (moussaka), Greek ring bread (kou loura), honey walnut pastry (baklava), and grape juice (in place of Retsina wine).

In one class, we planned a unit to see how color affects our reactions to our surroundings using four colors—red, blue, green, and yellow—in four weeks. Class members brought music that seemed to them to be suggestive of the "color of the week." Different posters, pictures, and art pieces from home filled the room each week. Standing lamps from home carried colored bulbs. Poetry, writing, and reading all related to the color. The students discussed how they were affected by each color and what moods each created or evoked. We discovered much about ourselves—and each other—in the discussions provoked by red, blue, green, and yellow.

Romeo and Juliet, rewritten in modern English by the class, becomes as meaningful as *Love Story* and as contemporary. All the problems of adolescent ninth graders come out in class discussions, and the students are not only studying great literature, but are, more significantly, studying the why and how of themselves. We go to the lovely outdoor Forest Theatre on the University of North Carolina campus and act out our favorite scenes. No need to memorize anything. Reading lines is just as effective; with nature around us we have the perfect stage setting.

What better way to study *Walden* than to meet on a Saturday morning for a healthy discussion, then eat our box lunches out in the garden, after which we just lie back and relax with the sky our cover. Then we take a walk through the botanical trail in our town. We are observing at close hand what excited Thoreau. We are, in this ecology-conscious world, awakening our own sense of wonder, a feeling that Rachel Carson urged all to have. The written word takes on live meaning.

How can one be sensitized to the world around him? We take a trip to the museum, wander through the exhibits for about twenty minutes. After that time, each student sits on the floor in front of whatever painting, sketch, piece of sculpture, or art form he prefers. He observes it, studies it, savors it, "feels" it for some time. Then he writes creatively—not a description of what he sees, but of what he thinks or feels as a result of having been "immersed" in this art form. Many of my students return to the museum again and again as a result of this lesson.

How can we share our experiences? How can we grow as people? Some of my very capable students spend time tutoring seventh graders who lack reading skills. The ninth graders claim that they have learned much about sharing and relating and that they have gained a sense of pride and fulfillment in helping others grow. The seventh graders are learning to be more secure and more self-confident because upper-classmen are anxious—not just willing—to help them.

Often one learns more about himself by studying others. We had studied black literature and American literature. To establish that all groups have basically the same needs—love, understanding, fulfillment, recognition, success—we decided to study the American Indian. Nearby, 120 miles from us, live the Lumbee Indians—native to North Carolina. We started an Indian unit with the idea of using correspondence to get to know our Indian friends well before meeting them on an exchange weekend, when they would come to live in our homes with us. We read works of Indian authors and poets. Instead of merely studying what others have said *about* the group, we learned about them by reading what *they* have said, and we discovered the beauty and sensitivity of Indian literature.

Then there was the time (tahm) when I, as a born Northerner, could not understand the southern dialect, nor could my students understand me. I said, "greesey"; they said, "greazey." Which was correct? We taped the voices of students and teachers who had definite accents because they came from five different areas of the country (Massachusetts, Canada, Tennessee, New York City, and North Carolina). First, all said "water," then "greasey," "all," "time," "gone," and twenty-five other words. As we listened to the tape, each of us held a list of the words with five columns after each word. For each word, we checked the area in which we felt our pronunciation was most nearly approximated. Many of us found that, because of exposure to others through travel or listening, we had no one uniform way of speaking. Each had adopted patterns of others. There was no "pure" speech. There was no *right* way to say a specific word. The result was a greater acceptance of speech differences and, thus, a better understanding of the differences among people. Eventually, better understanding will hopefully lead to liking and to getting to know people better.

I have often had students make mobiles as substitutes for written book reports. Each has represented the heart of a good piece of literature. *The Old Man and the Sea* came to life in the black outline of a large fish, inside of which was stretched the body of the old man, which surrounded the frame of a boy, inside of whose slender frame hung a red heart. The love of the boy gave the old man the courage to capture his fish.

We have used the team approach to learn about Greek mythology. Several of my classes have made a large hand-made collage—two horses, one male, one female, holding 15 pockets each, in which are inserted cloth handkerchiefs embroidered with names of Greek gods and goddesses and Greek heroes and heroines. It's our "Concentration," which

the students made by hand from pieces of old dresses, aprons, and leftovers. The students are always very proud of the "hanging" and really enjoy the project.

One group made a slide-tape presentation of things they liked about school, and things they disliked, with ideas for correcting the faults. We decided not to complain unless we could offer solutions. We felt rewarded when the presentation—with two carousels going at once—brought some of the needed changes, because we brought awareness to those who saw them.

There are those who call these methods unnecessary gimmicks, but student after student speaks of finally loving to read. Parent after parent is pleased at the enthusiastic approach of his son or daughter to his English class. We write daily in class—either to music playing as the class enters the door, or about a poster on the wall, or about a movie students want to react to with their own personal essays. One can't learn to write without writing. The improvement of writing in each pupil's folder from the first to the last day of class is remarkable—almost without exception. So, if these are "gimmicks," they work. In this case, it would seem, the end justifies the means.

All teachers should teach things that they can become excited about, for when the students become aware of that excitement, learning begins to happen. Unless the teacher acts as a catalyst, not much will go on in his class. But once the students get going, not much will stop them. The teacher's only problem will be to find enough time in the school year to get everything done. If the teacher brings his own unique self to his classes, they will never be dull.

Grey Culbreth Junior High School
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Agnes F. Hanbach

Readers' Choice

Books still retain a fascination for many young people. Recently, in an effort to arouse this latent interest in my students, I conducted an inquiry into the nature of books in preparation for the first of eight outside reading assignments.

One day, when classes convened, my students saw the following on the front board:

> There is no frigate like a book
> To take us lands away,
> Nor any coursers like a page
> Of prancing poetry.
>
> This traverse may the poorest take
> Without oppress of toll
> How frugal is the chariot
> That bears a human soul!
>
> Emily Dickinson, XCIX

These students, grades 10 and 11, are used to referring to the board daily. Soon a hand went up: "What is a frigate?" We were off. A boy explained the term even to the extent of describing the rigging and the former wartime use of the vessel. The conversation continued, elaborating terms such as frugal, traverse, coursers, etc., until Dickinson's meaning was clear. Individuals were led to express similar feelings about books they had read. Perceptive remarks were made. Small slips of paper were distributed, and I suggested that each one write a brief statement about what he thought a book was. Informal chatter began; a little writing was done. Some asked to think about it and bring in their ideas, so it became a small homework assignment. Following is a selection of the results:

A book is a ticket to travel anywhere and meet anyone in the world.

A book is a caravan traveling through man's history, a jet streaming through his conscience.

A book is a journey into a soul.

A book is an invitation to explore the life of man as it was, is, and some day may be.

A book is a sword that cuts through a man like a hot knife through butter, to bring out what he is like on the inside.

A book has many faces. It can be a melody that sings to you, a mystery that puzzles you, a joy that opens your heart, but to some, just an object to be judged by its cover.

To me a book is a source of peace, to take me away from the problems and frustrations of the day.

I am a book, but I haven't been written yet.

There were many more, some well said, some inept, but all mirroring the writer's feelings. In each class we had Ditto sheets made of all the offerings, unsigned. Each student voted for the ten he thought were best. An immediate tally was made, and someone suggested that the winners be posted on the bulletin board. The boy who knew about frigates offered to make the drawing. On one side he lettered Dickinson's stanzas, and on the other he painted a beautiful frigate. Winners' statements were colorfully lettered on small pieces of construction paper and attached to the ship's sails, ten selections for each class. It was one of the most provocative displays of the year. Students brought their friends in to read their selections, which were signed when posted. Before and after school it was a gathering point. It also served nicely as a springboard for the reading assignment.

In reporting on their reading, students have a choice—write or talk. Talkers volunteer for panel or Gemini teams. The writing is done in class, is always brief comment, and its form is usually chosen by the writer. For this first effort I gave to those who wished to write a Ditto sheet of "What is a book?" statements from their own class and asked them to select one and show in what way the idea was reflected in the book they had read. These bits of writing were among the most imaginative of the year. Selected papers were "published" on the bulletin board, always a rewarding technique.

More than half the students in most classes prefer to discuss their reading in a group, and they are allowed to prepare while other students are writing their reports. Panel teams are popular. Five students work together; all read the same book. The leader they select serves as moderator. His job is to keep the panel talking, so he need not be the best speaker. He should, however, be a good reader and thinker in order to help his team bring out vital, interesting areas of the reading. For panel reports thirty minutes class time are given followed by ten minutes of questions from the class. All listeners write unsigned comments about how the talk went, ideas uncovered, suggestions of any kind. These are of much interest to panel members. Judgment of their peers is more significant than the teacher's even though the teacher does the grading.

Competing Gemini teams work for fifteen minutes each, describing their books as they wish. A five minute question period follows so both teams are heard in the one class session. Here also class comments are collected, and listeners vote for the book they would prefer to read. Gemini teams are always eager for the score.

These talk teams arouse much interest. Not only do participants enjoy them, but they are valuable because of the enthusiasm they create about books formerly unfamiliar to most class members. Effects are sometimes unforeseen. I recall a panel of tenth graders whose horizons were stretched and sensitivities shocked by *Brave New World*. After much discussion of Huxley's fantastic society they dealt realistically with the selective test tube breeding which some saw as imminent today. One gentle, naive boy pondered quietly for several minutes; then his hand shot up and he blurted out, "I don't approve of making babies that way. They should stick to the regular process!" Fancy the reaction. One thing is sure. That class will not forget *Brave New World*.

I am convinced that much intellectual and emotional growth accrues from such discussion, and much awakening to the seriousness of human problems. For example, favorite reading choices are Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Satire is an adolescent mode—the ironic seems to satisfy something in them. Perusal of these novels involves the ideas of current government control, dubious democracy, the right to love, the impact of violence, and the whole disturbing modern scene. Incidents and personal anecdotes are unfolded. Pros and cons clash. Inevitably, Vietnam takes center stage. There are the hawks and the doves, the militant liberals and the Buckleyites, and all shades between. At times the walls may resound to what seems useless debate. Eventually, however, a thinking soul reverts to the text, even though answers are not easily discerned

there either. The objective is not to postulate an ideology but rather to raise questions and provoke thought.

There are other ways to throw light on readings. Students come up with their own ideas. I recall an honors class that selected an area of *Moby Dick* and made a fifteen minute film on it. It was amateurish, tongue-in-cheek stuff, far out and funny. This crew learned much about the cost and difficulty of filming, narrating, and synchronizing and something about the perversity of their inadequate equipment. Still, it was valuable experience and thoroughly enjoyable. Another group presented a spirited debate centered around the novel *The Godfather* and the idea of organized crime. A class of tenth graders staged a trial of the "killer" in *A Separate Peace*, a project that rated bravos, although the jury's verdict was not altogether accepted. Methods of exploring books are unlimited. Given an enthusiastic teacher and an abundance of books, primarily paperbacks, a resourceful class can write its own ticket.

Results of all this emphasis on self-chosen reading cannot be readily determined. The greatest dividend accrues from the rich experience in what I call "heart learning," which is intuitive and, therefore, immeasurable. There has been sufficient positive response, however, to prove the activity valuable in helping to form the reading habit and develop taste in literature. Outside reading may even be quite the best thing that happens in an English class. How much of it would come about without an involved teacher?

Clarence, New York

James L. Allen, Jr.

Writing Paragraphs about Paragraphs

The classroom practice described here attempts to achieve two ends through one device by having the content of students' written paragraphs be a continued analysis of and a commentary upon sample paragraphs. For example, the student might be given an assignment to write a paragraph about the paragraphs in a given article or essay. His topic sentence would have to make a general statement about the nature, style, or quality of paragraphing in the essay. Then the body of his paragraph would have to support that statement by doing such things as discussing the location of topic sentences, discussing clear-cut and effective uses of transitional devices, discussing instances of the author's failure to use transitional devices where he might well have, and pointing out cases in which the author failed to develop a paragraph as fully as he should have or could have.

Obviously, this exercise would also give the student practice in one of the more fundamental and readily usable methods of paragraph development, the use of examples or illustrations. However, other methods of paragraph development, such as comparison and contrast, classification, and analysis could also easily be adapted to the exercise. If the paragraphs are written in the classroom rather than out of class, the teacher can be available to give advice or make suggestions about such choices or adaptations of method of development.

One of the chief advantages of this exercise is that it combines the grasp of abstract paragraphing principles in paragraph analysis with actual paragraph creation and the practical employment of those principles. The chief apparent disadvantage of the exercise is that it works a double hardship on the teacher when he evaluates and grades the students' written paragraphs. He must not only judge the students' own written work but must also check the paragraph *content* for accuracy and validity of statement about the paragraphing principles and elements

in the essay used as a subject for analysis. The exercise does give the teacher a two-dimensional view of the students' understanding of paragraphing principles, however, and is therefore worth the extra work involved in evaluation.

Finally, what might at first glance appear to be a further disadvantage turns out to be a virtue in disguise. The double nature of the evaluation makes a written comment to the student less satisfactory than an office conference. Although the office conference is time-consuming, it gives the student a better understanding of what he has done and also brings him into more direct personal contact with his teacher. The time used is compensated partly by the fact that the paragraphs are written in the classroom, thus relieving the teacher of any special preparation for the session. But much more important is the fact that the individual conference, if properly handled, usually creates for the student better rapport with his teacher, greater confidence in himself, and more interest in his developing ability to handle language well. For a number of reasons, then, any extra effort that this classroom practice might require of a teacher once or twice in a term is, in the long run, more than well invested.

University of Hawaii at Hilo
Hilo, Hawaii

William J. Hunter

The 'What Am I?' Compositions

No other activity in an English class is as unwelcome as the assignment of a composition. One approach I have found to be generally accepted by students, however, is the utilization of mystery and detective techniques. Prepare the students by telling them that they are to compose a paragraph of specific length, and that they can pick the topic. The idea is to describe any object, scene, event, condition, or place, except a person. While students choose a topic, give them the procedure for organizing the material.

They are to write the description in such a way that the object, scene, event, condition, or place remains a mystery until the last sentence. A person is rather difficult to guess, so you should limit the topics to those suggested above. It might also be better to restrict the first paper to the description of objects. Do this in class so you can help those who may be confused by this new approach to writing.

By use of indirect reference and subtle clues the desired effect is achieved. Many students use personification and the personal point of view in creating the composition. As an example, one girl in my junior class wrote: "I am made of bone or plastic and come in many pastel colors." As a first sentence it leads you on to read the rest and yet does not reveal the object. Her last line read: "I should be used at least three times a day and I am used with a variety of delicious tasting creams."

At this point a complete paragraph will serve to illustrate the possible results of this assignment. This composition is taken from one of my students just as she wrote it.

> Most people think I'm a very pleasant type person. But deep down inside where sometimes I myself don't find it, I have a very rotten streak. I guess it all stems from the fact that I've had no education and am always being taken as a silly little fool. I'm forced to play

> with and amuse all the younger kids, by younger I mean much younger, in the age bracket of one month to four years. And even when they don't ask for me at Christmas time their parents buy me anyway. I guess because I'm very sentimental to them. Here's where I take revenge. It's usually late Christmas day after all the big red fire trucks and crying Mama dolls are exhausted that the average little kid discovers me. After trying to invade my house from every corner, they find some way to get at me, and this always winds me up. Then I get so mad, well maybe I shouldn't, maybe I'm just jumping to conclusions, but my anger gets the best of me and I scare the living daylights out of the poor curious kid. Well after I get to know most of the little ones I soften up inside and the bright smile on my face no longer hides my rotten streak, but shows all the excitement and amusement popping up inside of me. So please, next time approach me with understanding and don't get mad when I jump up in your face.

While this description is a bit longer than most paragraphs in this assignment, the vivid hints and personification clearly bring to mind a jubilant jack-in-the-box.

Another technique is the use of a pronoun without an antecedent. For this particular project I made it clear that this procedure would be acceptable, but for this case only. Most students are notorious for doing it in any case and these papers, and subsequent class work involving the compositions, made students more aware of the importance of antecedents. It works better than simply telling them that a pronoun without a noun is useless.

> It's something that is very common and is almost a necessity. It can come in a variety of colors and it's not anything outstanding. We use it many times a day. I guess it would be pretty hard to get in and out of places if it weren't for me. We turn it many times and don't even realize it's there. Now it's not really important in big department stores, but in the home and in school it is found all around. I guess you could say it opens the door.

This is probably the first time a sophomore ever thought to describe a doorknob. It is awkward in spots, but it does convey the essential observations, down to noting that doorknobs are not necessary to the stores that use revolving doors.

The last sentence of the paper should contain the only direct clue, but the object should not be named at all in the paragraph. You should also stress the note of mystery, and caution students not to let others know their topic. When you have read all the papers, return them to the

authors and spend some time in class reading the papers. This is the reason the object should not be named at all and why it should not appear obviously simple to guess. Tell the class members to raise a hand when they think they know what is described. Wait until the paragraph has been completely read, then ask those who think they know. Let the writer answer, "No, that's not it," or "Yes, you guessed it." The game adds interest and challenges the class to be more careful in the next paper.

The results in my own classes were gratifying. Over a period of two weeks, using two full class periods, five home assignments, and fifteen minutes in the rest of the classes during this time, a new interest in composition and clarity became evident. Some students achieved a pinnacle of expression, as in this paragraph:

> Everyone, no matter who or what he is, needs one thing. This life necessity is what I am trying to describe. All the gold in the world or all the beauty on earth is not more valuable than this. Yet some say it is useless. To some it brings happiness, to others pain, to some tears, to others laughter. Sometime in your life you have either given it or received it. Some actually possess it, but still go searching for it. Maybe they look in the wrong direction, they look toward money, or fun, or the "Good Life." The wall they erect does not imprison it. Somewhere inside it still exists. People sing about it, others write of it. They try to explain it, but can't find the words. Many realize all too late that they once had it but now it's gone. It is one of the few things that holds no prejudice to age, race, color, or creed. It is the power that conquers all.

Practically all the students learned to like playing with words so as to conceal or make a mystery of something. A few were fascinated by the prospect of describing a truly unexplainable mystery, such as love. They all enjoyed the fifteen minutes of class spent each day in guessing topics. The use of pronouns without antecedents began to subside. The correct use of adjectives and adverbs became a conscious exercise. Probably the most important achievement of the two weeks came when we went back to concentrating on literature. More than a quarter of the students in my classes asked for more composition assignments. So, bleary-eyed but content, I continue to receive paragraphs of exposition and narrative, in addition to the "What Am I?" papers.

St. Aloysius High School
Jersey City, New Jersey

Marilyn Sewell

Looking Backward: A NOW Approach to American Literature

The times demand much of the teacher of American literature. Never have students questioned the order of things so much—and yet, never have students so much lacked a sense of history, a feeling of respect for the past and its influence on the present.

Literature, of course, grows out of a people and out of a time. Events, beliefs, philosophies, common practices, values—all of these form the milieu out of which a literature is born and flourishes and takes on meaning. Without this human dimension, the study of literature and the other arts can turn into dry academia, an intellectual exercise that has little significance for today's involved and seeking students.

The teacher should capitalize on his times. He can make the immediacy of the moment work for him in the classroom, and in doing so he can simultaneously meet the challenge of his own peculiar day, the always present and valid plea for relevancy.

Hoping to combat what I felt was a growing inertia among my college-bound junior students, I decided to restructure my American literature program from what was essentially a literary-aesthetic emphasis to an historical-sociological-philosophical one, approached through an analysis of modern society. The resulting lessons brought some of the most exciting moments I have had as a teacher.

The first unit, which I shall describe in detail here, set the tone and emphasis for the year, during which the evolutions of the various philosophical periods were traced, and each was shown to have contributed more or less to what we Americans now are as a people.

The initial assignment was diagnostic—I wanted to discover their attitudes about their country and also to see their strengths and weaknesses as writers. So the students wrote an impromptu paper describing

the United States as they saw it today, focusing on whatever aspects of American life they considered most important. I asked only that they be honest in their responses and emphasized that I was most assuredly not expecting a paper with the usual Fourth-of-July tritisms. These papers were informally assessed (encouraging remarks and no grade), returned to the students, and then taken up and saved until the last day of school, when they were again returned to the students, some of whom found it difficult to believe what they had written—both in style and content—nine short months before.

Next we needed an atmosphere in which to work, an atmosphere steeped in NOW. The students and I brought old magazines from the past year or so, and we made the classroom into one giant collage, with articles, pictures, cartoons, phrases, and even single words proclaiming the American scene—the temper of her people, her pressing problems, her consuming involvements. The students moved and talked freely, reading, cutting, taping, and sharing. Soon there was little wall space showing, and the students were ready to move into the next phase: learning about the nature of the artist and his function in relation to his society.

The students were asked to bring to school the next day an object with which they would like to spend some time.[1] They arrived with everything from a pet hamster to a railroad spike. I then asked each one to become thoroughly engrossed in his object for twenty minutes, using as many of his senses as possible to examine the object in detail. When time was up (and most of the students were surprised that twenty minutes had passed), we talked informally about their experience and tried to relate what each had felt to the way an artist perceives. Then I asked each to prepare for the following day some sort of response to communicate his experience to his classmates: they could write a short poem, give a monologue, sing or play a song, assume a posture, draw a picture, or in any other way show how they felt. They had become, in a small sense, artists for that one day.

Their presentations were followed by a discussion of the artist's relationship to his society—how an artist reflects his society and at the same time warns it and leads it. This idea and the subject of creativity in general are treated in the excellent film "Why Man Creates,"[2] which the students saw and discussed.

To develop and deepen their understanding of modern art, in particu-

[1] See Rita Jean Childs, "A Psychedelic Poetry Unit . . . Why Not?" *English Journal* 57 (December 1968) 1335-1337.

[2] Available on free loan from the Kaiser Aluminum Company.

lar its social function, the students divided themselves into groups of from three to six students according to an area of art in which each was interested: painting, sculpture, theatre, architecture, literature, dance, music, or film. Some of the students weren't excited by any of these major groups, so I loosened my definition of *art* to include such fields as clothing design and automobile styling. Each group then reviewed the current trends in their area, trying to discover how both form and, when possible, content revealed our modern period. The students were turned loose in the school library for several class periods to see what they could find. Many used community resources after school (libraries and working artists), and some bought paperback books treating their subject. Also, they were aware of what their classmates were doing, so besides gathering their own information, they were constantly passing on needed material to one another. Always there seemed to be the heartening noise of work in progress as I circulated around the room, guiding, encouraging, and offering suggestions.

Their work was in preparation for the next assignment—group reports communicating to the class what had been found in each area. My instructions were two-fold: the reports had to be informative and they had to be interesting. I challenged them to think of original approaches, to get variety in their presentations, and to involve their audience as much as possible. The result of their efforts was exciting and stimulating communication. One group had us all sit on blankets while they gave a classroom-sized rock festival as a part of their presentation; another gave a creative dance workshop; still another showed films and talked about recent changes in that popular art form. There were no nodding heads during these reports—the kids deserved, and got, the attention of all.

Next, each student narrowed down his area of interest to one artist or perhaps to one trend or influence he had noticed. He then wrote a short documented paper, retaining the original focus: how this artist or that trend revealed modern man and his society. Because the students were interested in and knowledgeable about their subjects, the great majority of papers was exceptionally clear and lively. The margins were soon filled with words of praise and personal reactions which had been stimulated by the content.

That was the first unit. For the rest of the year a history of ideas approach was used, but always the orientation was to the present. For example, in the study of Puritan literature, the students were asked to find out what the Puritans were *really* like, in order to get away from the

Thanksgiving stereotype. Then we looked for modern references to Puritanism and for evidence of the Puritan influence that remains with us today. Besides the scanty work of our early writers, the students read Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Miller's *The Crucible*, and a modern essay concerning the Protestant Ethic—"Three Puritans on Prosperity" by A. Whitney Griswold.

Although I teach at a school for the gifted where all of the classes are essentially on an honors level, I believe that a modified plan using the sort of approach described above might be tried with average classes in a comprehensive school. This approach excites students because it lets them see literature as the genuine expression of a people caught in a particular time and space, not as pretty words written by a lone artist pursuing truth in a vacuum. Also, this orientation gives the students a much-needed sense of history, which allows them to understand and accept their day and its challenges—and perhaps even helps them accept themselves.

Benjamin Franklin High School
New Orleans, Louisiana

Conrad Geller

Situations in Composition

Composition work in my classes has been a little more pleasant and I think more profitable since I began to devise *situations* for the students rather than assign topics or prescribe forms. Situation assignments control neither the specific subject matter nor the genre; instead, the teacher sets up a dramatic role for the student to play. Assuming the role, the student writes something appropriate for the character he is playing.

One procedure I have used in an elective course for seniors of average ability may serve as an example:

1. You are the principal of the high school, and something important has happened—a big change in policy, a demonstration, bomb scare, riot. Write something appropriate. (*Suggestions:* a memo to the superintendent; a letter to parents or to one particular parent; a talk to students at an assembly; or a news release).
2. Now you are yourself, a student at this school. Write about the same event, but something appropriate to yourself. (*Suggestions:* an editorial; a letter to the editor; a note scribbled to a friend who has asked you what happened; an official statement, perhaps a confession)
3. You are a Martian anthropologist who has been keeping a close watch on the school. (*Suggestions:* a page from his notebook; one of his weekly reports to home base; an excerpt from his forthcoming book, *Coming of Age in America*).

All three of these compositions should be written in class, preferably in a relaxed setting with much looking at other students' papers, talking, and circulation of the teacher among the writers. When all three assignments are completed, there should be reading and discussion of the work. Having one student at a time read all three of his compositions will lead to a discussion of tone differences. Having several students read their first composition will focus sharply on the differences in their assumption of the role of the principal.

Strange things happen. Expect some fine bureaucratic language in response to the first assignment, some swear words in response to the second. Some joker will invariably write his third paper in Martian. But I have found that it is fun, and it just might be educational.

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EILEEN S. IBARRA

Ethnic Literature and the Teaching of English

In addition to black literature, interested teachers can include the use of the literature of other ethnic groups to meet student requests for relevant materials in English courses. For one short story course, for example, I used paperback editions of American, Irish, Jewish, Italian, Spanish, German, and Russian tales in translation. The students, reacting favorably to the assignments, gave oral reports on their interpretation of the universal aspects of human nature from a comparative literary point of view. One student reported on "man under pressure" from Russian, American, and Italian sources; another wrote about irony in Irish, American, and Jewish short stories; and another discussed the supernatural in Spanish, Irish, and German folktales.

Old Irish romances from the pre-Christian era and Wilde's fiction were the extremes for a special freshman course in fiction, and a course in drama included plays from Wilde, Synge, Shaw, Lady Gregory, Yeats, O'Neill, O'Casey, Behan, and Beckett. Religion and politics, forgotten topics in the cocktail circuit, sparked quite a few spirited discussions. Love, honor, pain, pleasure, reality, the suffering of the innocent, and the degeneracy of the educated elite were analyzed in light of the current American scene. The students' interest more than justified the many hours of preparation that went into the organization of the courses.

Ethnic literature successfully supplements the teaching of English. American students, representing a multi-ethnic background, can identify with written works by literary giants from other cultures. In addition, they begin to understand that there are universal qualities discernible in all ethnic groups and that no one group has a monopoly on any human characteristic.

University of Florida
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John Golata

An Approach to 'The Sound and the Fury'

William Faulkner gave sound advice to a person who did not understand one of his books. Faulkner suggested that the man read the book a second time and, if necessary, a third or fourth time. When my senior class decided to read one of Faulkner's works, none of the students was aware of Faulkner's dictum. In fact, they had begun reading Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom* the previous year but abandoned the book because its complexity proved too much for them. The students were eager to turn to Faulkner again, but they felt that their approach this time had to be better organized, and their concentration redoubled.

We accordingly began our reading and study of *The Sound and the Fury* with my suggestion that everyone read through the entire book over the vacation period that preceded our actual classroom work with the novel. The responses of the students were predictable and remarkably similar after they had completed this initial preparation: "I can't understand what's going on." "It's impossible to get through more than three or four pages of the first section without losing track of what time it is." "The large number of characters is confusing." "I understand what Faulkner says, but I don't know what he means." Fair comments, all of them. It was at this juncture that the students sought direction and help.

Genealogical charts of the Compson family were a must at this point. Once the students saw that Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and Caddy, the four children, were the people around whom the novel revolves, they were in a better position to understand the shifts, turns, and leaps in chronology that occur, particularly in the first section of the book, the inchoate thoughts of the man-boy Benjy. Edmond L. Volpe, in *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner*,[1] has attempted to document the time shifts that occur repeatedly during the Benjy section, and, to a greater extent, in

[1] New York: Noonday, 1964.

the Quentin section that follows. I had this valuable information reproduced for the students, so that they might be better able to follow the thought processes and the actions of Benjy and his brother Quentin.

It was really gratifying to see the scrupulous attention this class of honors seniors was willing to devote to an explication and understanding of the first section in particular. Though the events described in this section are technically rendered through the mind of an idiot, it was obvious to us as we proceeded that a careful understanding of the Benjy section was central to an understanding of the entire novel. The mutual attraction of the two brothers Benjy and Quentin for their sister Caddy, both for quite different reasons, attracted extensive comment from the students. Some pointed out the similarity of both men in regard to the loss of innocence. For Benjy, the different smell of Caddy after she has been with one of her nocturnal wooers is a clear indication that his world is now permanently altered. Caddy no longer smells like trees (the smell of innocence). When she uses perfume for one of the first times Benjy can remember, he wails and moans until Caddy hurriedly washes off the hated sign of a growing sexuality.

Quentin's obsession with Caddy is patently more damaging to him than is Benjy's worship of his sister. For Quentin is a sentient being, in some respects an anachronistic prototype of the antebellum southern gentleman. Quentin has been born at a time when the fissures created by the Civil War have widened. Mr. Compson could perhaps supply the corrective to Quentin's desire to isolate himself and Caddy in a world of their own, but he is too emotionally removed—". . . no battle is ever won. . . . They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools."[2]

If there is a pathos in the Benjy section, however, there is also a certain glorying in life on the part of Benjy that the students pointed out repeatedly. Since Benjy has scarcely any mental resources to call upon, his life is lived on an elemental, sensual basis. He responds to kindness, to the dancing hypnosis of the fireplace. In almost every sense of the term, Benjy experiences existence: he is alive and he does matter to people like his sister Caddy and the Negro servant Dilsey.

It was the character of Quentin, Benjy and Caddy's brother, that invited the greatest speculation and examination, however. As we read of Quentin's last day on earth, June 2, 1910, we noted the overwhelming

[2] William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: The Modern Library, 1946), p. 95.

significance of time in this section of the novel. Since this is the day that Quentin has chosen to end his life, clocks, watches, and bells become persistent reminders of the impossibility of arresting time, as Quentin attempted to do to preserve the memory of his relationship with Caddy. The students shared the careful preparations of Quentin on that last day, his fight with a seemingly flawless Harvard classmate, Gerald Bland, and the problems with the little girl who follows him about until he is rather comically arrested. We reflected on the meticulous care with which Quentin cleans the vest that has been bloodied in the fight with Gerald Bland, and the seemingly pointless incident near the end of the section regarding Quentin's brushing his teeth. But, as the students pointed out, taking care of details is one way to try to impose order upon a world suddenly gone chaotic.

When we turned to the third and fourth sections of the book, the students breathed a figurative sigh of relief, for here the narrative proceeds quite directly, and the time shifts that puzzled us during the first two sections now fit into a coherent pattern. The third section in particular, told by Jason, the brother of Caddy, Quentin, and Benjy, struck many of the students as being both humorous and quite tragic. Jason, the man who lost the promised job at the bank because of the behavior of Caddy, rails against women in general and the Compson family in particular. It is now 1928, eighteen years after the suicide of Quentin, and Jason still finds himself tied to a despised job as a clerk in a hardware store. With a monomania that is fascinating for the reader to behold, Jason seems almost to delight in the problems that attend providing for a family that is not properly grateful. The neurotic Mrs. Compson, clinging to the frayed illusion of Jason and her being better than the rest of the family because they are essentially Bascombs; Benjy, now a helpless creature of thirty-three; Quentin, Caddy's daughter; and the servants who still remain at the Compson household: all these allow Jason to rail at his misfortune. When the young girl Quentin disappears down the pear tree, to flee with her gentleman friend, her money, and the money that Jason has saved for himself, Jason acquires a renewed reason for living. Since he has systematically been holding back much of the money that Caddy has been sending home for the care of her daughter, Jason is blocked from reporting the theft of any of the money, lest he implicate himself as the thief he has been.

The students commented upon the *deja vu* quality of the end of the Jason section: the young girl Quentin leaves the Compson home under the same kind of cloud that Caddy had left under eighteen years earlier,

It was at this point that we all began to see clearly the consistent pattern of the novel: the disintegration and fall of a family, with all the attendant emotional turmoil such a fall precipitates.

The fourth section of the novel, generally ascribed to the Negro servant Dilsey, is in some ways the most pacific and yet most emotionally moving portion of the novel. As Dilsey prepares to take Benjy to her church, she displays a nobility and an iron capacity to survive that establish her as possibly the strongest person in the novel. As she sits with Benjy in church, listening to the Reverend Shegog (brought all the way from St. Louis), Dilsey responds with fervor to the message of the preacher. On this Easter morning, the message of endurance and faith in the Lord comes through to touch Dilsey's heart. In leaving the church with Benjy and her son Frony, Dilsey speaks the words that serve as perhaps the most effective summation as to what has taken place in the Compson family: "I've seed de first en de last."[3] For it is really only such a person as Dilsey who has been able to observe with some sense of detachment the shifting fortunes of the family she has served for so long.

In the final famous scene of the novel, in which Jason turns the carriage bearing Benjy and his servant-companion Luster about the right way, the wailing of Benjy is abruptly stilled, and the carriage continues in its orderly counterclockwise movement around the courthouse square. Order has been reestablished, but it is an order that has been dearly bought. Just as the violence and turbulence of war becomes muted by the passage of time, so too do we approach a kind of serenity at the end of *The Sound and the Fury*. My students interpreted the events of the novel as reflecting in microcosm the confusion, misunderstanding, and self-doubt that plague many of today's young people. The students agreed that this is a book that requires active involvement, but one which rewards such efforts richly.

Niles East High School
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[3] Ibid., p. 395.

Mary Bramer

A Poetry Experience

When I began to teach an experimental English class of all boys—potential dropouts—without the help of a text or curriculum guide, I soon realized that my first problem would be getting the eighteen boys in my classroom (or whatever percentage was present) to realize that we were going to study. After that, weeks were needed to build mutual trust and respect—weeks during which we all failed at times. By Thanksgiving, they had become very special, and unusually cooperative, individuals, so I decided to begin our poetry experience.

Since they had shown interest previously, when they had done a little "acting," I assigned each a character from the *Spoon River Anthology*—Lucius Atherton, Shack Dye, Roscoe Purkapile, and others included on the Caedmon recording.[1] I introduced each character briefly and explained the interesting graveyard frame Masters used. Together we began reading aloud. They stumbled over the words often and I frequently had to paraphrase for them, but I was thrilled with the depths of their perception, their comments, and their suggestions. Together we listened to the record a few days later, and my confidence soared as I watched their interest.

Occasionally we read a poem together. They found truth in the anonymous poem attributed to a soldier in Viet Nam, beauty in Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," reality in Morris Bishop's brief account of passing a car, and moral uncertainty in "Traveling Through the Dark" by Stafford. Since these studies were brief and staggered, I met very little objection to poetry. I felt ready to have them write their own.

The assignment was to write eight or more lines of original poetry; the results were disappointing.

[1] *Spoon River Anthology*, Caedmon recording TC1152. (Available from National Council of Teachers of English, Stock No. 81208.)

I really don't like school
But I think its kind of cool,
People say if you quit school
You end up in a foo bird pool
And that isn't very cool,
So take my advice and stay in school.

If I had a car
I would drive it all day long.
But I don't have a car.
So I set all day long.
When I get my car.
I will go vary fast.
But untill I get my Car
Ill just think, about how fast it will go.

Winter time is free with it's Breeze.
Bold when it is cold and
muddy when it is Sunny
and warm.
Track throw the house with
your gollish.
That is what is good
and what is Bad about winter

They seemed caught up with rhythm or rhyme, and all else was forgotten.

I searched to find a way to help them. I retyped each poem (or the first lines of longer poems) on a primary type typewriter and had visuals made for the overhead projector. Working as a group in class, we searched for sharper words, for ways to cut clumsy lines, and for better spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, but this was largely superficial.

The real problem became obvious when Dave admitted ownership of the following poem as it flashed on the screen (most authors chose to remain anonymous as their works were projected and discussed):

The bird in the tree,
    he looks so free,
He fly with all of ease,
    as if he flots in the breese.
The bird land with the greatest of ease,
    as if he lands in the breese.

When I asked Dave what his poem meant, he said, "Don't ask me! Is it sposed to mean sumthin?"

That was the problem exactly. Suddenly I realized how they had

created their poems. Each one had written a line and then thought of something that rhymed with it or rollicked along in a pleasant meter. Each had a rather vague central theme, but no one had zeroed in on it. I assigned a revision which resulted in some technical improvement based on the class work with the overhead. However, we left poetry study until I could plot a way to return in a quest for meaning.

Later, I remembered a method that had worked well when I taught about symbolism—allowing them to cut, paste, and draw to make their own symbols. I decided to use the physical, "craftsy" approach to poetry. I collected picture magagines and supplies, told them to pick a subject for a collage poster, and suggested school, war, America, home, and several other broad areas. We practiced limiting a topic, for example, one particular war, children in war zones, or air war and bombing. I stressed the need to present only one approach to the topic.

Going through the magazines with freedom to cut and tear sustained them the first period, but by the second day most had settled on a subject and were alerting one another to look for pictures on the space walk, Viet Nam, pollution, automobile racing, violence in the streets, etc. Each chose a large sheet of poster paper on which to mount his pictures. Some lettered the poster's title on it. The variety of their ideas amazed me. I called the results "visual poetry."

To transcribe the visual effect to written poetry, small composing companies were formed. I explained that finished posters and poems would be displayed in the room, a good stimulus since the students enjoyed recognition. Armed with a thesaurus and a dictionary, each group clustered around the primary type typewriter. I typed their ideas, ignoring the poor suggestions and waiting for good thoughts. The poster's title became the title for the companion poem. Ideas were not scarce, and the poster's owner sometimes faced difficult choices. When a good word or phrase was suggested, I was quick to praise it. Sometimes I asked specifically for a phrase to go with an earlier one; sometimes I directed their attention to an area of the poster they were forgetting. If I asked for a better word, a thesaurus would yield something. I deliberately tried for interesting ways to arrange their thoughts on paper so that they could see variations in lines. Each poem was identified with the poster owner's name and the words *and Co.* typed at the bottom.

As each finished poem rolled out of the typewriter, a pair of hands was waiting to receive it. Each boy held his clean, white sheet with the large, bold typing as if he had been given a valuable gift and perhaps he had—pride. They mounted the results against the wall where the display

stayed for several weeks while they basked in the attention they received.

Perhaps these efforts (since they were joint efforts) were not valuable, but the quality was so much improved that I felt rewarded. I honestly tried to stay in the role of typist as the ideas were submitted, although, in rejecting some, I know I was serving as editor, too. But the boys needed practice in not always being satisfied with their first efforts. My goal, after all, was not to make poets of them. I merely wanted to tune out some of their dislike and present them with some pleasant experiences associated with poetry. The results were most encouraging.

POLLUTION

Smog,
    dirty air,
        carbon monoxide,
            scum,
                muck,
                    filth!
Factories,
Cars,
Burning trash,
Sewage,
People!
Some people care,
    and some don't.
Some do something about it,
    and some don't.

PROGRESS

From 1915 styling,
From the rumble seat,
    From 1932 styling,
    From hub caps,
From running boards and fender skirts;
    To 1970 styling,
    To bucket seats,
    To deep-well mags,
    To 4-speed stick,
To fast-back and fiberglass!
    Progress!

DISCOVER AMERICA!

Look for the signs of peace.
Behold the naked feeling.
Observe the weird appearances,
    the hippies,
    the yippies.
Admire the view,
    drab,
    wild,
    ugly,
    unclean.
This way to America,
    land of the freak,
    home of the filthy.

WAR

Viet Nam—
    the Communist enemies,
    death and defeat
        everywhere!
Starving civilians—
    the natives,
    brave and suffering
        innocent!
Fighters for freedom—
    Americans, green berets,
    Viet Namese and U.N. forces
        lonely!
The ugly war!

POLLUTION

"Breathe deeply."
Carbon dioxide.
"Again."
Sulphur dioxide.
"Again."
Smoke.
"Again."
Gases.
"Again."
Gasp,
Cough,
Choke.
Nothing!

SPEED KILLS

A wet road,
A dangerous curve,
Treacherous highway,
A maniac with a gun,
Car trouble,
Darkness,
Defective car!
Watch out for the other guy!
Stop!
Congratulations!
You have survived.

SPACE

Up, up into space!
How far shall I go?
Up, up into space!
I will never go!
Now men are already there;
There's nothing to see
Except stars and dust
And infinity!

By the end of the year when I told them I was going to read them a long poem they settled in and got comfortable, expecting to enjoy it. I read them "David" by Earle Birney,[2] which they did enjoy. We even paused to study the foreshadowing and the conflicts and once again tackled a moral question—Is murder ever justified?—through poetry. I feel quite sure that their experience with poetry during the year brought some positive responses. Being boys, they might never admit it, but their actions told me I was right to include it in our curriculum.

Elgin, Illinois

[2]"David" from *Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needle*, edited by Stephen Dunning, et. al. (New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard Co., Inc., 1969).